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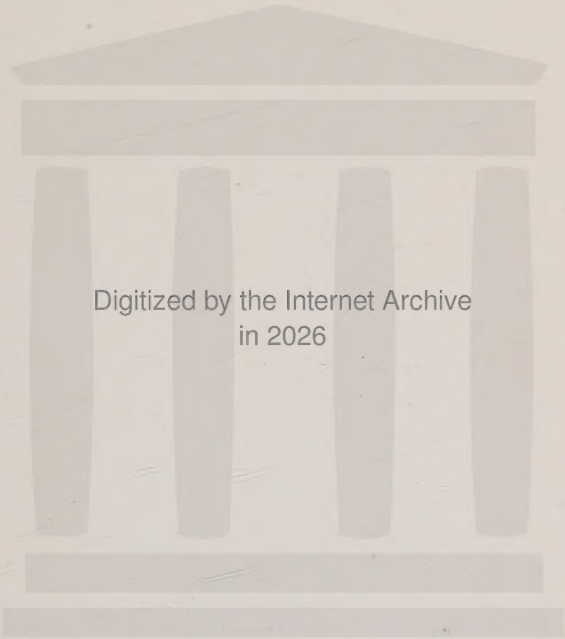
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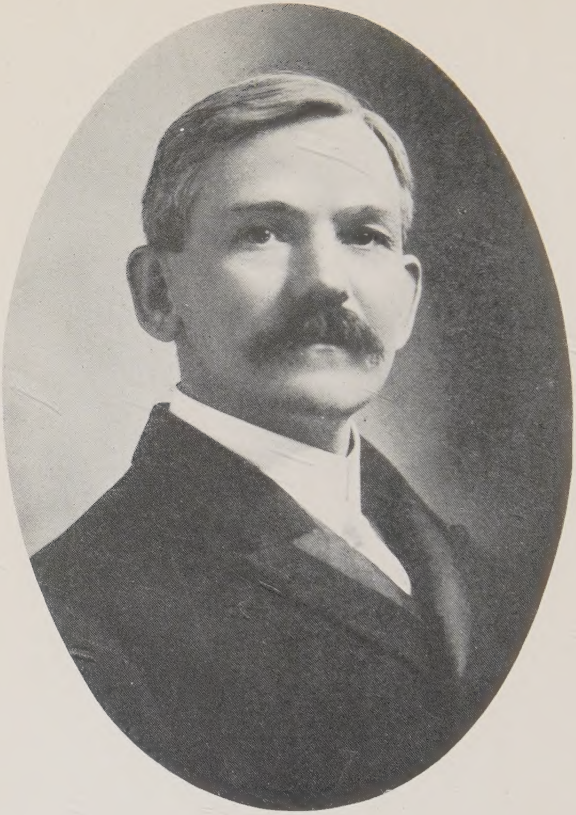

Wm. F. Anderson

The Compulsion of Love

Sermons Preached at Ossining-on-Hudson, N. Y., in the Highland Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church

By

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OF THE NEW YORK CONFERENCE

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To My Mother

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I.

THE COMPULSION OF LOVE.

"For the love of Christ constraineth us."—2 Cor. v, 14.

In our word constrain is the idea of compulsion. It comes to us from the Latin, and means literally to bind together; to fetter. It is thus defined in the Century Dictionary, "In general, to exert force physical or moral, upon, either in urging to action or in restraining from it. To press, to urge, to drive,—hence to urge with irresistible power; or with a force sufficient to produce the effect; to compel; to necessitate; to oblige."

The word used in the Greek is equally strong. It is the same that the Apostle uses in Philippians i, 23, where he declares, "For I am in a strait betwixt two." He says literally, "The love of Christ hedges me in; encompasses me on every side; binds me tight; *forces* the current of my life into a certain channel." It is not difficult

to see his meaning. On the one side there bore heavily upon him the thought of God's love for man, and on the other his vivid realization of man's need of God. By these two mighty truths he tells us the course of his life is determined as surely as the course of a river is determined by the high banks which shut it in on either side.

But this declaration seems to be out of harmony with other teachings of the same Apostle. He declares here that the law of his Christian life is a law of compulsion, and yet in other places he boldly asserts that he is a free man. He glories in the freedom of the sons of God. He writes to the Romans, "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." He exhorts the Galatians, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." The phase of this truth brought out by the text is one that was ever present with the great Apostle. His favorite form of introduction in his epistles is to refer to himself as the servant of Jesus Christ, and the word used, is the old Greek word for slave. Here is at least an apparent contradiction. Now it is a fair question, How can these statements be harmonized? Here is a con-

fessed slave boasting of his freedom. How can a man be a slave and at the same time free? Where shall we find the harmony, if harmony is to be found?

If the question be raised as to whether Christ's love for us is meant, or our love for Him, I answer I believe the meaning in the context is Christ's love for us, and yet both ideas are comprehended in the passage; Christ's love for us first in the order of time, and our love for Him as the reciprocal influence of His love upon us. Now in seeking for the principle of agreement between these teachings, the type of compulsion spoken of in the text must be noted, "For the love of Christ constraineth us." It is not the compulsion of superior physical strength, but the compulsion of love. Not a compulsion wrung from a man's inability to resist, nor one that is granted with even so much as a feeling of protest; but one that a man grants gladly, joyously, when he comes to a realization of the wonderful meaning of the love of Christ.

This compulsion of love is the strongest principle operative in the world's life. A picture comes before me. The bustling town has been lulled into sweet repose by the wooing voices of the night. The soft lullabies have passed away, save from the

dreams of innocent childhood. Prayer and praise alike have ceased until the dawning of another day, and over all the scene has crept a stillness prophetic of that which steals over each one as the day of our life on earth comes to its close. But hark! the quiet of the night is broken; the cry of fire penetrates the midnight air. Soon it is discovered that a home recently peaceful and happy is being consumed by the fury of the flames. Higher and higher they rise, and out upon the midnight air sounds the alarm. Men rush to and fro, and they whose business it is to deal with the devouring element hasten to the scene. The stream of water is turned on, but the flames have made great progress. It is hoped that every living being has escaped in safety, when suddenly a child is seen at the window of an upper story. Piteously it cries for help. The position is recognized as one of great danger; hearts are touched by the pathos of the scene. Disciplined though they be to danger, the firemen look at each other sorrowfully and shake their heads. Too late, too late. Suddenly the attention of all is directed to the slender form of a woman, who rushes wildly through the crowd. Upon her pure face are written the commingled feelings of despair and determination. Men discern in an in-

stant what is about to happen. They try to prevent her nearer approach; they tell her it would be an act of madness to go within the walls; that there is no hope. One by one she pushes them aside as she cries, "I must, I must; it is my child yonder." In the Iroquois Theater holocaust, a woman's form rigid and lifeless was found carefully hovering a little child in such way as to prevent its injury by the flames. The mother's back was burned and blistered to a crisp, while the fire had not touched the little form, though life was extinct from suffocation. It is only love that can do such things.

It is the compulsion of love. In its practical operation this principle penetrates every relationship of life. It overleaps all distinctions of caste, color, clime and condition. Ridiculing all impediments and surmounting every obstacle it presses on to its goal. Christian hearts feel its power in every nation. Turning their backs upon friends and the blessings of civilization, they gladly face the dangers and hardships of heathen countries, as they cry with St. Paul, "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise." Thus it will go on until it becomes "the bond of perfectness." But it reaches beyond the boundaries of earth. It extends to the skies and

forms the power of attraction between the throne of God and the heart of man. Let no one suppose that it is a slight force in its influence over the human heart. It reaches down to the depths of sin and degradation and lifts man up into fellowship with God. St. Paul has declared it to be a bond inseparable. "I am persuaded," he says—persuaded by whom? Not by the sophistries of human reasoning, not by "taking counsel with flesh and blood," but by a careful examination of the truth on every side, under the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit, he says exultingly, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Now, as a matter of fact, between this type of compulsion on the one hand, and freedom on the other, there is the most perfect harmony. The acceptance of the statement may require a modification of our idea as to what constitutes freedom. The Bible is ever setting our thoughts right on all subjects. What, in its light, is the meaning of the magic word freedom? I doubt if there is another idea, apart from the idea of God, which has exer-

cised a greater influence upon the civilization of mankind than that of freedom. Inspired by the sublimity of the thought, men have taken up the cry, "Freedom! Liberty!" and at the cry tyrants have trembled, kingdoms have crumbled, empires have fallen. It has been a sort of talisman in the world's progress towards the broad principles of democracy. And yet I venture to assert that there is no word in the language whose real meaning is more often misconceived or more inadequately comprehended.

The common idea of freedom would be well illustrated by the picture of a frail bark upon the bosom of the sea, without pilot or rudder; with nothing to determine its course. Lying thus it is free to be driven by every wind, and drifted by every tide. So men conceive of freedom. Countless foreigners flock to our shores with the thought that American liberty means absolute freedom from restraint. The eradication of these false notions, and the substitution of the true idea of freedom, constitute one of the greatest problems confronting the American people to-day.

So in the inner secrecy of their thought men, claiming to be intelligent, conceive of the idea of liberty. It is not an unusual thing for them to reject

the claims of Christianity upon them, in the belief that the acceptance of it means the giving up of their freedom. Every pastor has met a species of so-called independent thinkers, who claim freedom from prejudice of every kind, on the ground that they hold themselves aloof from all personal relations to Christ and His Church. They seem to think that they must hold themselves free from all law, all well-defined principles, and keep themselves in an attitude of mind in which they are free to follow every new whim or fancy. Is this freedom? Nothing could be farther from its true idea.

For purely practical purposes, and not with any thought of dogmatic controversy, let us inquire, What is freedom? We will approach the subject by means of familiar illustrations. Here are two horses on the street—one a wild, untamed animal of the prairie; the other a gentle beast, long trained by skillful hand. The one, aware for the first time of a will superior to his own, protests against the bit, rebels against the directing hand of his master, falls into a rage of anger and fights until his strength is exhausted. The other has learned to heed gracefully and naturally every beck of his driver; at every word and at every sign he changes his gait to suit the pleasure and convenience of his master.

Which is the better picture of freedom? Take another illustration. Here are two children—one so willful and rebellious that, at a command of its parent, it throws itself upon the floor in a fit of rage, and protests until the sight is pitiable; the other, having learned to trust the wisdom and superior judgment of its parent, yields a willing and glad obedience, regarding every admonition. Which better represents the true idea of freedom?

Consider now the multitudes of virtuous, godly men and women who in this fair land enjoy the high boon of civil liberty. They are building happy homes; they are giving strength and direction to the kingdom of God on earth; "they are adding to their faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity." They build up great enterprises for the benefit and blessing of mankind; they alleviate the sufferings of the poor; they carry into the homes of sorrow and crime the consolations and hopes of the Gospel of Peace; they are engaged in a work which might well tempt an angel to abandon his seat before the throne of God; they are free to carry out the divine plan and purpose in their lives. America

affords them a theater of opportunity and usefulness such as has never before been seen by the people of any age or nation. What an inspiring picture! We are reluctant to dismiss it. But now let us go to our prisons and talk with those behind the bars, whose days are made up of the awful and remorseful monotony of prison life. Ask them why they no longer enjoy the great privilege of civil liberty. A truthful answer will bring the information that in every instance they have violated or are believed to have violated the law of the land.

The purpose of these thoughts will now become apparent. The horse finds freedom in the wish of his master; the child in the will of its parent; the citizen in the law of his country. In the light of these illustrations, what is the freedom of the Gospel? It may seem a hazardous thing for a man to attempt the definition of the word. It has been a veritable battle-ground in the progress of human thought—the storm-center of many a fierce controversy. Nevertheless, we venture to define it. The freedom of the Gospel is the perfect harmony between the will of God and the will of man.

I once met a devoted Christian woman upon whose features were written in unmistakable lines the traces of suffering, and yet of sweet resignation.

In conversation she said, not in a spirit of complaint, but of angelic humility, "My life has been full of furnace experiences. I do not know how better to express it than to say *furnace* experiences. Trials, sorrows, losses, disappointments have followed each other in rapid succession. They have come thick and fast. It has been a trying ordeal, but I have come at last to the point where the will of God is sweet to me. It may mean sorrow, it may mean suffering, it may mean irreparable losses, but if it is God's will it is sweet to me." That is a blessed experience, and represents the highest work of divine grace in the human heart. He who always keeps His will at this point is always free.

In view of these teachings we are prepared now for the message—"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." It is no accident that the Son of God is the Author of our freedom. He frees others because he alone is free, absolutely. He is free because his will has always been in perfect accord with the will of the Father. Before his incarnation it was written, in behalf of him, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart." At the beginning of His public ministry, He said: "For I came down from

heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me." These words are the keynote to his life. So being free himself he makes us free when we become united to him. He does it by lifting us out of our own will into the realm of God's will; by showing us the marvelous beauty and wondrous kindness of God's law. To be hid *with* Christ *in* God, this is freedom.

It was a favorite saying of one of the ancient philosophers, "No man is free until he has become a slave to law." There is a mighty truth in the statement. It accords with Christian teaching. It is in harmony with St. Paul's views, who could glory in his freedom and at the same time proclaim himself a slave of Jesus Christ. Here, then, at last, and here alone, is freedom; freedom for the powers of the soul to think, to hope, to aspire, to serve, to achieve, to love, to grow. Here every shackle is broken, and the immortal spirit of man, created in the likeness of his Maker, is untrammeled. Here the goal of life is reached; its end perfectly fulfilled. A free being. In the presence of such a conception, language seems an impertinence. It is the fairest flower of Christian idealism, and yet it is a practical and sublime possibility for every child of God.

The compulsion of love is the only type of compulsion which will survive. The law of the survival of the fittest is now a well-established principle in science. It obtains in the realm of morals and was clearly set forth here, long before men ever dreamed of its existence in the scientific realm. Its perfect realization has not yet been attained, but the centuries are hastening on towards its consummation. Upon this principle no other form of compulsion can be perpetuated far into the future, because this is the only type which can exist, without the destruction of manhood. The coercion of one human will by another means degradation to the one coerced. No man who studies the institution of slavery can doubt it for one moment. The most cruel thing about slavery is, not that it deprives men of their civil rights, but that it destroys the inherent and divine possibilities of greatness in any people when long continued. There was a day when brute force was universal. Might made right in the palmy days of the Roman Empire. The death-knell of this type of compulsion has been sent forth into all the earth by the Gospel of the Prince of Peace.

I will not say we have escaped every species of it, even in this late day. As a matter of fact, we have not. Instances are yet to be found of great

monopolies which have been as conscienceless in the exercise of power over those within their hands, as was ever the Roman Empire in its cruel treatment of weaklings. The tyranny of greed is as debasing as the tyranny of unjust government, and must come to an end. There are those who bewail the spirit of restlessness among the laboring classes in our times. No reasonable man will attempt to justify the lawlessness which manifests itself in connection with nearly every strike. This is anarchy, and deserves, as it receives, the severe execration of the American people. But when I think of the tyrannical attitude some great monopolies have assumed towards the laborer in defiance of American public sentiment and of the law of right, it seems to me cause for gratitude that from the masses there should come a strong voice of protest. It is the instinct of manhood asserting itself in the lowly walks of life; it is a plea for the recognition of a God-given right, and the Church of Jesus Christ must recognize it as such before these problems are solved.

The influence of corrupt political organizations is another species of power debasing to society. Submission to them means degradation to any community. The American public has been longsuf-

fering towards this infamous excrescence of our modern civilization, but the voice of an "organized public conscience" is coming from all sections of the country. This means that the defiant, tyrannical rule of the political boss and of corrupt political parties is rapidly hastening on to an inglorious end. So will this work of sifting and refining go on with increased rapidity, until one truth shall have gained recognition above all others, namely—the universal brotherhood of mankind.

"The crest and crowning of all good,
Life's final star, is Brotherhood;
For it will bring again to earth,
Her long-lost poesy and mirth;
Will send new light on every face,
A kingly power upon the race.
And till it come, we men are slaves,
And travel downward to the dust of graves.

Come, clear the way then, clear the way;
Blind creeds and kings have had their day.
Break the dead branches from the path;
Our hope is in the aftermath—
Our hope is in heroic men,
Star-led to build the world again.
To this even the ages ran;
Make way for Brotherhood—make way for man."

There is another good reason for believing that the compulsion of love alone will survive. It is God's method; the method of the Gospel; its only

method. The great power of the Gospel is its drawing power. Christ said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Throughout the Gospel, words of gracious invitation abound. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Failing in this power to attract men to Himself, our Lord seems to have recognized that even he had no other resources at His command. This is clearly intimated in the passage, "O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not."

In the manner of his approach to men, St. Paul recognized this method always. He asserts it in verse 11 of this chapter: "Knowing the terror of the Lord," he says, "we persuade men;" and in verse 20 he applies it. Here he pleads with the unsaved world; note his language: "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." His method is the same when he would lead Christians

to a higher state of grace: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

I fail to find a single instance in the New Testament in which Christ or one of his ambassadors attempts or even suggests the coercion of the human will in the work of salvation. If God coerced the will of any man simply by virtue of His superior strength, such coercion, I say it reverently, would be a high species of brute force. He does not do it. His approach to the human soul betokens the great dignity with which He has invested it, and forms one of the most impressive features of the Christian Revelation, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord;" "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with me."

But, in conclusion, the principle of the text works definitely.

The Hastings's Dictionary of the Bible defines love as follows: "Love is that principle which leads one moral being to desire and delight in another, and reaches its highest form in that personal fellowship in which each lives in the life of the

other, and finds his chief joy in imparting himself to the other and in receiving back the outflow of that other's affection into himself."

In the light of this definition let us read our text anew—"For the love of Christ constraineth us."

It is not strange that we should desire Christ and delight in Him, that we should find our chief joy in loving Him and in receiving back the outflow of His affection into ourselves. But that He should desire us, and delight in us, that He should find His chief joy in imparting Himself to us and in receiving the outflow of our affection into Himself—this passeth all understanding. O! the wonder of it!

When a man comes to see and really to feel this great truth, then does the love of Christ constrain his entire being with power irresistible: his heart, his will, his judgment, his reason, his imagination, his ambition, his time, his talents, his possession. It makes one say with Charles Wesley,

"And can I yet delay
My little all to give?
To tear my soul from earth away
For Jesus to receive?

Nay, but I yield, I yield;
I can hold out no more;
I sink, by dying love compelled,
And own Thee conqueror."

The process of the Spirit's operation may not be put into words. It transcends both language and thought. But the fact of it is joyful, glorious. It is the one fact which above every other is deeply inwrought into the consciousness of the children of God, which gives purpose and sweetness to life and saintliness to character.

II.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE PREACHER.

"And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach."—Mark iii, 14.

The attitude of our times towards the question of authority has been variously characterized. There are those who believe that the age resents, even despises authority of every kind; that this is a stiff-necked generation, fully bent upon following its own whims and fancies regardless of all standards of truth.

On the other hand, President Tucker of Dartmouth, in "The Making and Unmaking of the Preacher," says: "The mind of the age is ready and anxious to come under the authority of truth. Let us not wrong the temper of our age however much we may share in its mental perplexities. I am confident that nothing would receive so true a welcome from the mind of this age as some great vindication of religious faith."

Among the questions most often mooted in this connection, is that of the authority of the ministry. We hear much of the "decline of the power of the pulpit" and of the "passing of the preacher" as an authoritative factor in the affairs of to-day. If the prophets of God are really losing their grip, the fact bodes ill for the future, not only of the profession, but of society and all its interests. For "where there is no vision, the people perish."

The fact that many to-day believe this to be true, is a sufficient apology for our quest for the authority of the preacher. Let us admit at the outset that some types of authority for the ministry, which were formerly held in high honor have indeed largely passed away.

There are still unmistakable vestiges of a form of authority belonging to the ministry which was professionalism pure and simple. High respect for "the cloth" was everywhere apparent. The chief elements in this quasi-authority were ecclesiastical millinery, a conventional holy tone, and a certain sanctimonious bearing in the pulpit and out of it. This, to be sure, has passed away, and we may well thank God that it has. It conduced to effeminacy in the ministry, and was a deadly enemy to downright manliness. In the day when this obtained,

the preacher could speak ex-cathedra upon almost any subject without having his word questioned. This business is now at an end. The demand of to-day is that the preacher shall be a man among men, in his public utterances and in every other way, without the slightest respect to the "cut of his jib," the style of his clothing, the tone of his voice or the bearing of his person. This is certainly a clear and distinct gain for the ministry itself. In the new order of things God is saying to every one of his prophets to-day, as he said to Ezekiel, "Son of man, stand upon thy feet."

Another type of authority in the ministry, inherited from the past and still lingering to-day is the High Church conception. It is found not only in Roman Catholicism, but in that form of Protestantism known as High Church. It is of course a survival of the priestcraft of the middle ages. It grows out of the so-called doctrine of the Apostolic Succession, which Phillips Brooks characterized as "the purest figment." In the realm of the spiritual, it would be difficult to conceive of anything more superficial, more mechanical or more materialistic. It is utterly astounding that so many minds in the past have seemed to find rest here. How so earnest a soul as John Henry Newman could find content-

ment in it, is one of the strangest of psychological phenomena and passes comprehension. Once accepted, we can see how it might minister to intellectual repose, but the acceptance of it would seem to require a paralysis of the rational faculties amounting to stultification. This species of purely mechanical authority has no future except where reason be gagged and intelligence be smothered. In general aspects, it is quite similar to the professional type already noticed, and can not survive.

The authority of traditionalism has in recent years been fading out of our life as never before. There was a time when the bolstering up of truth by the citation of lists of great names from out the past, was a popular and effective method of teaching. But the day for this is largely past. Certain powerful influences have been at work invading the domain of traditionalism. Chief among these is the scientific temper of mind so characteristic of every phase of the scholarship of our age. To its great honor be it said that this age has made a vast amount of original research for itself. Particularly is this the case touching the sources of Scripture truth. In Biblical research the cry has been "Back to the original document"—the primal source of information. In theology the cry has been "Back

to Christ." In both instances the result has been far-reaching and highly beneficial. In the light of these investigations we have come to see that there has been in the past considerable of the "laying aside of the commandments of God and the holding of the traditions of men," as in our Lord's day upon earth. The practical benefit of these movements to the cause of Christianity is thus summarized by a great scholar, who comprehends the subject critically from the view point of science and, at the same time, sympathetically as a devout Christian: "Prior to the new Biblical science there was really no rational basis in thoughtful minds either for the date of any of the New Testament books or consequently for the historical truth of any of the events narrated in them. Gospels, Acts, and Epistles were all alike shrouded in this uncertainty. Hence the validity of the eighteenth century skepticism. But now all this kind of skepticism has been rendered obsolete, and forever impossible; while the certainty of enough of St. Paul's writings for the practical purpose of displaying the belief of the Apostles has been established as well as the certainty of the publication of the Synoptics within the first century. An enormous gain has thus accrued to

the objective evidences of Christianity. It is most important that the expert investigator should be exact, and, as in any other science, the lay public must take on authority as trustworthy only what both sides are agreed upon. But, as in any other science, experts are apt to lose sight of the importance of the main results agreed upon, in their fighting over lesser points still in dispute. Now it is enough for us that the Epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Corinthians have been agreed upon by all as genuine and that the same is true of the Synoptics so far as concerns the main doctrine of Christ Himself."

The establishment of these facts beyond the peradventure of a doubt has put into the hands of the Christian preacher of to-day a leverage such as the preachers of no former generation possessed. Thus God maketh the wrath of man to praise Him.

Still another species of authority held sway long in religious teaching. I refer to the authority of cold intellectualism represented by the logical faculty. The demands of the æsthetic, moral, and spiritual natures were disregarded, and the result was a high species of rationalism.

The general change which has occurred in this

realm finds definite and forceful illustration in one of the most interesting cases which has ever occurred in the world's history—the case of George John Romanes. Educated in the best universities of Europe, he early became enamored of Darwinism. He distinguished himself at a very early age for his original research in scientific subjects. In the earlier day he issued a work entitled "A Candid Examination of Theism" by Physicus, in which he reasoned from the extreme ground of Atheism. But before his untimely death in 1896 he is brought by the experiences of life to say "I see now it is Christianity or nothing." In his later and noteworthy book "Thoughts on Religion," published since his death, he tells us in substance that the mistake of his earlier reasoning was his apotheosis of the logical faculty; that when he listened to the pleadings of his intuitions and gave heed to the ideals of his moral and æsthetic nature, he found that the Christian's God satisfied every demand of reason and every need of life. He made the very important discovery that our reason is not the whole of us; that the deepest facts of the soul are its affections, its aspirations and its hungerings, and that these are satisfied only in God.

Hear his noble dying confession, composed but a few hours before his departure from this life.

"Amen! Now lettest Thou Thy servant, Lord,
Depart in peace according to Thy Word!
Although mine eyes may not have fully seen
Thy great salvation; surely there have been
Enough of sorrow, and enough of sight
To show the way from darkness into light.
And Thou hast brought me through a wilderness of pain
To love the sorest paths, if soonest they attain.

Enough of sorrow for the heart to cry
Not for myself, nor for my kind am I.
Enough of sight for reason to disclose
The more I learn, the less my knowledge grows.
Ah! Not as citizens of this our sphere,
But aliens militant we sojourn here,
Surrounded by the hosts of evil and of wrong
Till Thou shalt come again, with all Thine angel throng.

As Thou hast found me ready to Thy call
Which stationed me upon the outer wall,
And quitting hopes and joys that once were mine
To pace with patient step this narrow line,—
O! May it be that coming soon or late
Thou still shalt find Thy soldier at the gate;
Who then may follow Thee, till sight needs not to prove,
And faith shall be dissolved in knowledge of Thy love."

We therefore conclude that authority of the professional, the mechanical, the traditional, and the syllogistic type are one and all insufficient to meet the requirements of the preacher of to-day. Upon each of these types our age has written,

"Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting."

With so much to clear the way we now wish to institute a quest for an authority which will suffice for the strenuous demands of our time as regards the preacher. We wish to discuss this phase of the subject under two general heads, viz.:

THE AUTHORITY FOR THE PREACHER,
and
THE AUTHORITY IN THE PREACHER.

In order to speak with an authority which will command a hearing, the preacher must have an objective standard of truth. He must have some tribunal to which he may refer all questions with which he deals, with a confidence that will beget strength in himself and produce conviction in those whom he addresses. But where is so great a desideratum to be found? The pen of inspiration gives it to us in the passage "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The significance of the passage is very much wider than in its application to the merely predictive writings of the Scriptures. It is a well-known fact that the word prophecy in both the Old Testament and New Testament times was not at all limited to prediction, as it has come

to be, so generally with us. It embraced the entire idea of spiritual teaching. So giving a wide and, as we believe, perfectly legitimate application to the passage, we may plant ourselves confidently upon this proposition: *The words of our Lord constitute the sure and final standard of truth in spiritual teaching.*

In this connection our good friend Romanes serves us yet once again in a passage of inestimable value. He says:

"One of the strongest pieces of objective evidence in favor of Christianity is not sufficiently enforced by apologists. Indeed I am not aware that I have ever seen it mentioned. It is the absence from the biography of Christ of any doctrine which the subsequent growth of human knowledge—whether in natural science, ethics, political economy or elsewhere—has had to discount. This negative argument is almost as strong as the positive one from what Christ did teach. For when we consider what a large number of sayings are recorded of—or at least attributed to—Him, it becomes most remarkable that in literal truth there is no reason why any of His words should ever pass away in the sense of becoming obsolete. 'Not even now could it be easy,' says John Stuart Mill, 'even for

an unbeliever to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeavor so to live that Christ would approve our life. Contrast Jesus Christ in this respect with other thinkers of like antiquity. Even Plato, who though some 400 years B. C. in point of time, was greatly in advance of Him in respect of philosophic thought—not only because Athens then presented the extraordinary phenomenon which it did of genius in all directions never since equaled, but also because he, following Socrates, was, so to speak, the greatest representative of human reason in the direction of spirituality—even Plato, I say, is nowhere in this respect as compared with Christ. Read the dialogues and see how enormous is the contrast with the Gospels in respect of errors of all kinds—reaching even to absurdity in respect of reason and to sayings shocking to the moral sense. Yet this is confessedly the highest level of human reason on the lines of spirituality, when unaided by alleged revelation.'"

"I am the truth," said Jesus at the beginning of the Christian era. The rolling centuries have simply served to reveal the unfathomable depths of that saying condensed into four simple monosyllables. And now in the year of our Lord, 1904,

earth's strongest thought and best scholarship answer back, "*Master, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God.*"

Fired with burning zeal and challenging confidence, the old prophet called out to his fellow messengers, "O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem that bringest good tidings, lift up Thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!"

So the voice of the Spirit of God is confirmed by the centuries of man's progress, and cries in assuring tones to the Gospel messenger of to-day: "Lift up your voice with strength in proclamation of this Gospel; lift it up; be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, '*Behold your God,*' for the words of this gospel committed to you, are firmer than the hills or mountains in their fastnesses and more enduring than rolling earth or starlit firmament."

Here then in the words of our Lord is found the standard of authority *for* the preacher, secure, infallible, unshaken and unshakable.

But there must be an authority *in* the preacher also. Though our Lord's words be surcharged with the fullness of Divine energy, it is not enough

for the preacher to recite them in parrot-like fashion. There must be something in the man betokening authority—power. Power, that is the word. Why are we so much afraid of it? Our fathers made much of it and we, their sons, will prove ourselves degenerate if we allow the word and its idea to fall from our vocabulary.

Our Lord's life is a most fruitful source of study in this connection. His was a ministry of authority from beginning to end. Without His asserting any claim to authority men instantly recognized this quality in His acts and words. At the time of the stilling of the storm on the sea of Galilee His disciples turned aside and said to one another, "What manner of man is this that even the winds and the sea obey him?" So at the casting out of the unclean spirit from the man in the synagogue, they were amazed and said one to another, "With authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits and *they do obey him.*" His own favorite designation of Himself was "Son of man," but those who were witnesses to his words and deeds kept forever confessing, "Thou art the Son of God." No doubt His power of miracle-working entered into this as an important element. But altogether aside from this fact there was a native authority about His

words which all were quick to recognize. Thus at the close of the Sermon on the Mount, the record states that when "Jesus had ended these sayings the people were astonished at His doctrine, for He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes." So we are told that over in Capernaum, where He taught on the Sabbath-day, "they were astonished at His doctrine for His word was with power." Now what was this authority—this power?

Certainly it was not merely professional. Nor was it the fetichistic mechanism of the sacerdotal theory. This shallow view is clearly an importation into the Church from the Roman mind. Neither was it the authority of traditionalism. He was the most unconventional of all teachers. This was the ground of offense, as we know in numberless instances, to those who rejected His teachings. Again and again, as with a single stroke, He brushed aside their most time-honored traditions, flooding the question in hand with a divine illumination, in the light of which His hearers saw the truth stand out like lofty mountain peaks.

Yet once again, the authority of Jesus was not the authority of logic. Never in a single instance does He use the syllogistic method. The syllogistic

method would not be appropriate unless the truth in hand be also of the syllogistic type, and with this He seems never to have concerned Himself in either His public or His private utterances. Was our Lord a dogmatist? We often hear the question answered in the affirmative. But in the modern sense He was not a dogmatist. Dogma is originally from the Greek δοκεῖν, to think. It is a doctrine, teaching, a proposition which has usually been reached in study apart from the practical issues of life. A dogmatist, according to the Century Dictionary, is "one who asserts positively doctrines or opinions unsupported by argument or evidence." In this sense our Lord was very far removed from the dogmatist, for, as already stated, He never dealt with speculative truth. But in the questions of the soul's personal relations to God and the practical affairs of life, He was the supreme dogmatist of the ages. There was something about His method or manner in the mere assertion of truth which carried conviction with it, and rendered doubt impossible. In this respect He is a perfect model for His preachers in all times and places. If we dogmatize upon questions of the merely intellectual sort, men will quickly turn away. But if, on the other hand, like our Lord we "speak of that we do know and

testify that we have seen" they will both hear and heed.

What, then, constituted the authority of our Lord as a preacher? In seeking further to find the answer to this question let us glance for a moment at the method of His education. It was not granted Him to enter the halls of some great national university. Neither did He seek out a school of the prophets in order that He might become familiar with the lore of the conventional scholasticism of His day. No Socrates or Gamaliel led His inquiring mind along the hidden, winding pathways of speculative philosophy. But very early in His career He matriculated as an earnest student in life's great university, and began to search out as best He could the great underlying principles of this human existence. At the early age of twelve years, He had discovered one great vital truth. "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" This much at least was clear already, viz., that life could not be interpreted upon any basis of selfishness. For a man to recognize that he is in the world in God's behalf—that is the starting point of a divine career. The humble carpenter's home in despised Nazareth forms the very unattractive environment, in the midst of which He works out other

problems. As time goes on, the deep watches of the night find Him upon lonely mountain-side, in dark valley, amidst the woe of throbbing populations, and in the awful garden, trying to penetrate the meaning of life's oppressive mysteries and to solve its significance for Himself and other men. In the midst of it all a greater than Socrates or Gamaliel is His personal teacher. It is the good Spirit of God, who ever leads Him on, away beyond the boundaries of human knowledge out into light as clear as God's mind, and into life as deep as God's boundless love, until at last all worlds, all times, all problems, all interests, even the meaning of the Cross for Himself and its relation to the world's redemption, stand out clear, bathed in ineffable light. Thus is He led in His great prayer to the noble comment upon His own life: "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." In a word, that peculiar quality of authority which characterized His teachings was due to His clear, strong consciousness of the life of God within His own breast, made vital to Him as to all men by the Spirit of God. Nor do I understand that this was given to Him because He was, in a unique sense, the favorite Son of God. Through cloud and shadow,

through doubt and fear, through conflict and turmoil He made his way slowly but surely to the profound consciousness of God and truth. Unless I entirely misunderstand our Lord's humanity, He started at the point where you and I started. But O shame that our progress has not been more like His!

The foregoing discussion has already given a clear hint as to what it is that should constitute the authority *in* the preacher of to-day. Certainly if we are to do our Lord's work successfully, our word, like His, must be with power and it must find the source of its authority in the same fact—the deep, rich life of God within our own souls. The putting of it in our text is very significant: "And He ordained twelve that they should be *with* Him and that He might send them forth to preach." Simply the being with Him seems in itself to have been a sufficient preparation for their work. What a lesson to the preacher of all times! It is the man who lives with God, and he only, that is prepared to speak for God. When day by day the morning hour has been sanctified and sweetened by conscious fellowship with Him; when the noonday glory has been made the more resplendent by sweet thoughts of the shining of His face; when the evening hour has

become vocal to the soul by the still small voice of His Spirit, and all this as a habit of life, then are His servants prepared to speak with an effect which will produce conviction and compel action. From an authority like this the people will not, because they can not, turn away. Here at last is the genuine ring of reality. Only let it sound clear and strong and constant and men will recognize that it is indeed God's call to their wayward, weary hearts.

In comparison with an authority like this, the authority of mere professionalism sinks into utter insignificance. And with this, what need any man care about the fetich of Apostolic Succession? If he go clothed in this armor it will never occur to men to ask whether the hands of a certain line of bishops have been laid upon him, for they will *know* that even while he speaks, there rests upon him the hand of the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, and that he belongs to God's true apostolic succession of truth finders and truth tellers.

Neither will he be led astray by any mere human teaching, for his habit of fellowship with God, based upon the Christian revelation, will enable him—with an almost divine precision—to discern between the husk of human tradition and the kernel of divine truth.

By this means the preacher shall also be able to discern the true relation of logic to His message. He will see that while logic fills an important function it is certainly not the chief thing. "In Him was life and the life was the light of men," said St. John. "I am the light of the world," said a Greater than St. John. "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Here is indeed the light of all our seeing, the great regulator of all our progress. This it is which illumes the intellect, clarifies the reason and gives poise to the judgment. It saves a man from running into the foolish intellectual vagaries of the day, and by making the heart instead of the head his chief counselor, holds him true to the ideal of duty and of service.

Without this qualification the words of the preacher are "as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." But with the life of God beating strong in his soul his message will come to the hearts of men as if with a voice from out the eternal world. Unconsciously to himself his words, yea, his very presence, will be suggestive to other men of duty, of destiny, of immortality, and of God. He will create an atmosphere of reality in every circle in

which he moves. What a service is this to perform in behalf of God among the sons of earth!

That is a beautiful conception of Dr. Lyman's in his "Preaching in the New Age." He argues conclusively that preaching is both an art and an incarnation. And so it is.

The words, then, of the historic Christ form the authority *for* the preacher—the life of the indwelling Christ the authority *in* the preacher, and against this two-fold authority even the gates of hell shall not be able to prevail.

III.

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

"If a man die shall he live again?"—Job xiv, 14.

This is an ancient, universal, and important question.

That it is ancient is immediately apparent. It comes to us from one of the greatest documents of the world of antiquity, and must have been in the minds of men even before thus formulated by Job. We can easily believe that the first man who ever stood upon the earth must have propounded it to himself as he came face to face with death.

It is also true that the substance of the inquiry has been more or less distinctly in the minds of all men from the beginning. It has now become a well established fact, that no race of men have ever been found without the religious ideal. All heathen worlds have had their conception of God and a future life. When the Indian died his comrade buried him with bow and arrow by his side, that he

might be equipped for new triumphs in the happy hunting ground of the fathers. Crude though these conceptions have been, yet they are very significant. St. Paul has stated the deepest truth in the life of heathenism in the passage, "That they might seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him." So it is not an overstatement of fact to characterize this as a universal question.

The due appreciation of the importance of the question is begotten in our hearts by the experiences of life. So long as the circle of our immediate loved ones remains unbroken, and while we ourselves are in possession of vigorous health, we are likely to leave the question in the realm of our remoter thought. But on that day when we stood by a loved form and tried to follow the departing spirit into the vast unseen, the question betook to itself a new and deeper significance. And as the loveliness of earth's scenes fades from our own sight away, it will become to each of us in turn, an inquiry of tremendous import. "If a man die shall he live again?"

To whom shall we turn for a trustworthy answer to a question of such transcendent significance?

Listening to one class of minds we hear a categorical "No." There are those who reply very

promptly, and with great show of confidence in their opinion, that there is no life beyond; that death ends all. But there is something in each of us which protests strongly against extinction, and we can not accept this conclusion without at least inquiring carefully into the grounds of it. How do these men know that death means the obliteration of all the powers of the soul? We recall the established law of logic that, "it is never safe to predicate a universal negative." No man is warranted in saying there is no future life, until, with clear and penetrating vision, he has ranged the whole universe of God and found nothing. Who endued these unbelievers with such insight that they are able to give an emphatic no, with reference to a fact so spiritual in its nature, as the fact of a future life? The truth is, that the men who so answer pay little heed to spiritual reality of any sort whatever. For the most part they are of the earth, earthy. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Upon purely logical grounds therefore we may reject their verdict as of no consequence. With respect to a question of such significance we refuse to accept the conclusion of men

who have no fitness whatever to deal intelligently with the subject in hand. It may be put down as certain that they have never earnestly faced the question at all. Romanes well says: "Unbelief is usually due to indolence, often to prejudice and is never a thing to be proud of." The more a man knows the more modest he will be in declaring what sublime realities may not exist in the universe of the Most High God.

The reply of another class demands a more respectful hearing. I refer to the men who devote their lives to the study of science. They are not to be characterized unworthily. The world owes them a large debt of gratitude. They include all phases of opinion as to religion, from the shallow skeptic to the devout believer. What is their answer to this question? They are accustomed to proceed carefully at each step of the way towards a conclusion. Can they throw any light on this important inquiry? Strictly speaking it is a question which entirely transcends their realm. Were it not that the heart presses the issue, they might fulfill every requirement of their chosen profession, and leave the question forever untouched. They tell us of the discovery of two laws in their realm which may possibly have some bearing upon the subject.

These laws are known as "the indestructibility of matter" and, "the conservation of energy." No particle of matter and no ounce of force, they tell us, has been destroyed from the beginning. Both matter and force may be changed in outward form, but neither may be obliterated. Now if this be true, it would seem no violation of the law of reason to infer that spirit, which is confessedly above matter and material force and master of them both, may not be destroyed. Reasoning from analogy it seems a sort of prophecy of the immortality of the soul; an intimation at least that death may not end all. But this form of reasoning is neither conclusive nor satisfying. The best word the scientist, unaided by revelation, has for us is a "perhaps;" "it may be so." We are still in mid air. But this is no fault of science. Our question does not belong properly to this realm.

But we now turn to the highest class of the world's teachers—its philosophers. Proceeding upon the foundation work of the scientists, they have gone far beyond into the regions of pure thought. Certainly they can bring us an answer which will satisfy our minds and bid our hearts cease from fear. They tell us of this universal longing for enduring existence. That "the hope

of the future life has always been nestled in the heart of the race and found wings upon occasion." Plato and others have reasoned that there must be an outward reality answering to this universal postulate of the human mind. Else what is its significance? Is it probable that the mind of man unaided would conceive for itself a destiny greater and more enduring than that provided by its Creator? If man is not immortal nature "has imposed upon her sons and made them a lie." The form of the argument has force. It appeals to us as rational, and points to the probability of a future life. But, as with the reasoning of the scientist, the conclusion is not satisfying. It is at best only a sort of prophecy—an intimation. It lacks the authority, the certainty which the heart demands. We have not yet proceeded beyond the twilight. The fact of immortality for man is only a flickering star shining but dimly through the mists.

The spirit and teaching of the Old Testament do not advance much beyond this point. There are some indistinct anticipations of the doctrine of eternal life. But death still holds sway. Its pall has not been lifted. "The prevalent conception in the Old Testament time is illustrated by the figures which are used in the Old Testament to illustrate

death; and very marked is the contrast between the figures in the Old Testament and the figures in the New Testament. My life, says one writer, is like water poured out upon the ground: there is no hope of gathering it again—it is gone, absolutely, hopelessly, entirely gone. My life, says another, is like a shadow: it is here this moment, it has disappeared the next. My life, says another, is like a cloud: it hangs in the heavens for an hour, then the sun rises, blots it out of existence, it disappears—other clouds may come, that cloud will not return again. Life, says one, is like a shepherd's tent: it is taken down —will it be set up again? He does not know, he does not suggest. The tent is gone. Life is like a thread in a weaver's loom: it is broken, it is cut —will some skillful hands gather the ends of these threads and knot them together again and go on with the weaving? He does not know. It is cut—the end has come. These are the figures of the Old Testament. I fail to find one that has in it the hopes which run through the figures of the New Testament." If the question were left here then might we say with the Apostle, "We are of all men most miserable."

But we hear another voice speak. It is that of the Man of Nazareth, supreme among all earth's

teachers. What has He to tell us? We are struck with his behavior at the death scene. He does not act like other men here. In its dread presence every other man in history meekly acknowledges defeat. Not so Jesus of Nazareth. He carries in Himself to every death hour which he meets, a conscious and sublime superiority to its power. His perfect composure in the house of Jairus, at the gates of Nain and by the grave of Lazarus is striking, impressive. Death is present at these scenes, but Jesus is still Master. At will He touches a hidden spring of power and the dead come forth. Well may Napoleon exclaim, "I know men and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man."

Listen to his words at the grave of Lazarus: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." There is no suggestion here of a mere prophecy—a vague intimation. "Perhaps," "probably," "it may be so" have no place in the utterances of that solemn hour. The form of his speech is the most positive and emphatic known to language. "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet *shall* he live and whosoever liveth and believeth in me *shall never die.*" His words have the

clear ring of authority. They beget confidence in the certainty of their fulfillment.

But did not our Lord become subject to death? Aye, for a time he did. The only way really to conquer an enemy is to meet that enemy fairly and squarely, to enter into actual conflict with it; to let it do its worst, and to determine in the light of the issue who is victor. This is what Christ did by submitting to death. And after it had exploited its full power upon him, he came forth from its horrid grasp, triumphant, alive for evermore.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead may, with all confidence, be now accepted as the best established fact of ancient history. There is not time to-day to enter fully into the argument. Every honest man can easily do that for himself. Suffice it here to say that the argument is both cumulative and convincing. The power of a living Church to-day alone attests it sufficiently. We have found certain intimations of immortality, but here is the proof of it, clear, positive, trustworthy, absolute. And this conscious victor declares, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Immortality for the children of God by faith in His dear Son is no longer a debatable question. It is an assured fact,

certain as God. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."

The Church of God needs to develop in its life a new and stronger consciousness of this all-glorious truth. The minor strain is heard too often in song, in prayer, in testimony and in sermon. Let the fact be fully accepted and we shall have the note of victory everywhere. And then shall the joy of the Lord be our strength as in the olden time. The Christ whom we serve lives. He triumphs by the power of an endless life. So should His Church.

"Jesus and the resurrection" was the burden of the preaching of the early Church. It must be so of every age, if the age is to be strong in faith. As preachers of the Gospel of the everliving Son of God, we have little to do primarily with the speculations of science and philosophy. The hearts of men under the stress of life's burdens call for a teaching upon this important subject which shall beget strength for life's daily conflict. To be content to speculate about it, is to weary their souls and to give them a stone for the bread of life.

When I take up a volume of sermons and, turning to one which deals with this subject, find page after page devoted to the discussion of it from the view point of mere natural hypothesis, and only a

brief and incidental reference concerning our Lord's teaching upon the question, I am bound to feel that the preacher has missed his mark. To do this, is to attempt to illumine the blazing light of the Gospel with the dim torch of Greek philosophy. To all such the word of the Lord comes as it came to Elijah, saying, "What doest thou here?"

The note of certainty on this great doctrine is one of the strong points in the poetry of Robert Browning, and makes him pre-eminently the preacher's poet. How a sure confidence in the life eternal rings out from his rugged verse. If there be a clearer note in the age's poetry than in its preaching, the poetry will command the larger hearing, and the preachers will have no just ground for complaint. One of Browning's lovers has thus beautifully addressed him:

"Thou art so sure! Thy song is fraught
With that which saint and seer have sought
In vain to demonstrate. What spirit brings
Thee surety? Others hope; thou say'st 'I know
The spirit is immortal!' And for thy confidence
In that which was our mothers' ground of trust
We thank thee—thou so nobly learn'd, so just
In judgment, thought, and feeling; so intense
In all that makes a man—we give thee praise
And thanks, thou trusting soul, midst doubting days."

Moreover, the immortal life to the sons of God is not a speculation as to the distant future. It is a present possession, a conscious experience. There is but one life and we are now living it; and those who have gone beyond, share with us a life which to them has deepened and broadened, but which is the same life they lived by our side. We are not to become immortal by some mysterious change wrought at the time of death. We are immortal; the life of immortality is ours to-day. The best men in all ages witness to this truth. Hear Victor Hugo, beyond the threescore years and ten, in full possession of his splendid powers, exclaim: "I feel in myself the future life. I am like a forest once cut down. The new shoots are stronger and livelier than ever. I am rising, I know, toward the sky. The sunshine is on my head. The earth gives me its generous sap, but heaven lights me with the reflection of unknown worlds. You say that the soul is nothing but the resultant of bodily powers. Why then is my soul more luminous when my body begins to fail? Winter is on my head, but eternal spring is in my heart. There I breathe at this hour the fragrance of the lilacs, the violets, and the roses, as at twenty years. The nearer I approach the end, the plainer I hear around me the immortal sympho-

nies of the worlds which invite me. It is marvelous, yet simple. It is a fairy tale, and it is history. For half a century I have been writing my thoughts in prose and verse, history, philosophy, drama, romance, tradition, satire, ode, and song—I have tried them all. But I feel I have not said the thousandth part of what is in me. When I go down to the grave I can say like so many others, 'I have finished my day's work,' but I can not say 'I have finished my life.' My day's work will begin again the next morning. The tomb is not a blind alley; it is a thoroughfare. It closes on the twilight to open with the dawn."

A message on immortality from a heart like this thrills a man's soul with the power and richness of the life of God. What a lesson to the Christian preacher! Unless the eternal life beat strong and dominant in our souls *now,* we have no message on this subject for dying men worth either its preparation or delivery.

The Rev. Benjamin M. Adams, who was one of the youngest men I have ever known at a round eighty years, near the end of his life met an old friend whom he had not seen for nearly half a century. The old friend expressed great surprise at the youthfulness and buoyancy of the spirits of this

pre-eminent servant of God, and asked for an explanation. The explanation was at hand. "Why bless your soul, dear man, the eternal life has struck me." It had indeed struck him, and that hard and full. No man could hear him talk without feeling it, and this explains why his was a dynamic ministry to the end.

Concerning the blessed in that future state, two things are clearly revealed in the New Testament. They are to be with Christ, and they are to be like Christ. "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am there ye may be also." In Christ's immortal prayer He reveals His perfect humanness in the petition, "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am." Here is a revelation of that natural, tender sentiment, in the heart of Jesus, which makes our homes on earth a foretaste of heaven, and it will make heaven a home-like place. And St. Paul declares that to depart is to be with Christ.

Note what our Lord's presence meant to His followers during the years of His life in the flesh. With Him at hand neither hunger, nor disease, nor storm, nor devil, nor death had any terror for them,

because He was Master of them all. How touching the confidence of the two sisters at Bethany! "If *thou hadst been here* my brother had not died." What then shall His glorified presence mean to those who are with Him? To be with Christ—this means safety, security. If through the ages of eternity I am permitted to be with Him, I shall fear the power of no dread foe which can come from out the nether worlds of darkness and despair.

But this is not all. We are not only to be with Him. We are to be like Him. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

To be like Him! This means blessedness of character—the fulfilling at last of all our earnest strivings after excellence, attainment fully realized, complete.

Again and again my poor powers have tried in vain to picture to the imagination the high estate of heaven's blessedness. It is useless. But with these two facts clearly revealed I care not. To be with Him—this is the guarantee of safety from all harm. To be like Him—this is the fruition of all hopes and aspirations. It is enough.

And now since "life and immortality have been brought to light through the Gospel," we behold no longer a dim star shining but faintly through the mists. Our sure doctrine of immortality has become the star of humanity's hope, fixed, full-orbed, and splendid, beaming high upon our pathway, lighting us on to glory and to God.

The pall of death is lifted. Man's enemy is conquered. Let it be pealed forth in song, let it be the grateful acknowledgment in prayer, let it be oft proclaimed in sermon. "There is no death." "Mortality is swallowed up of life. This corruptible must put on incorruption; this mortal must put on immortality."

The work of Jesus Christ in this realm alone entitles Him to the everlasting love, the undying gratitude and the utmost service of every member of the human family.

La Tour d'Auvergne, that brave warrior of the Bretons, won the hearts of all his comrades by his spirit of daring and self-sacrifice. He would not hear of advancement in military rank, but continued to wear the uniform of a captain. His corps obtained the name of the "infernal column" because of the terror which its bayonet-charges inspired. The heroism and magnanimity of La Tour were

most remarkable. When he was killed the whole French army mourned for him three days; every soldier set aside a day's pay to purchase a silver urn to hold his heart; his saber was placed in the Church of the Invalides; and each morning, till the close of the Empire, at the muster roll of his regiment his name continued to be called at the request of his comrades, and the oldest sergeant answered to the call, "Dead on the field of honor." It was a touching tribute—the best that a half Christianized army could bestow upon a loved and trusted soldier.

But the soldier who falls in the ranks of the army of the Lord may have something better said of him. He is not dead on the field. He still lives on the field, and he lives on high. Departed child of God, whensoever and wheresoever thou mayest have fallen in the ranks of the army of the Most High,

> "Who calls thee dead?
> Dead! As a knight is, when he doth but lay
> Aside his armor with the battle won;
> Dead as a knight is, who hath gone away
> In better mail, beneath another sun."

IV.

PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION.

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."—James i, 27.

Pure and undefiled religion is our theme. It is an old one—as old as the race of man, and yet it is ever new. For a religion which gives light in darkness, strength in weakness, guidance in perplexity, comfort in sorrow and which floods the grave with the sure promise of the life eternal, has always been and must ever continue to be the passionate longing of the struggling heart of man.

In the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, the prophet draws a significant contrast between God's and man's habit of thought. He says: "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher

than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." God's thought is symbolized by the vast, high sweep of the heavens. Man's thought moves upon the low levels of the earthly standards. Prejudice and partiality are quite characteristic of the human mind. Men are forever moving in the little narrow circle of their limited horizons; in the circle of their educational opportunities, their social environments, their political affiliations, their religious sympathies and outlook. A man never gets away from prejudice until he moves out of these narrow circles and gives free range to thought as it traverses the vast realms of Divine truth. To see truth as God sees it, this is to be free from prejudice. Man is ever partial in his thought. God is complete in His. To man's mind, truth appears in segments. To God's mind, it is a circle.

Now this fact as to man is forcibly illustrated in certain prevalent partial human conceptions of religion. And before going on to consider our subject in the light of inspired teaching, we shall do well to be on our guard against mistaking certain incomplete conceptions of religion for religion itself.

Let us first notice the Formal View. This makes religion in its essential nature consist in a

form of some kind. It may be a form of doctrine, of Church government, of worship, of baptism, or of conversion. It is an easy thing to place so much emphasis upon the letter, that we shall lose the spirit of true religion. The conditions growing out of the division of Protestantism may easily prove an insidious temptation to narrowness, unless good men are on their guard against it. To take the peculiar tenet or practice of our own denomination and so to accentuate it in thought and life that it shall come to stand to us as if the sum and substance of religion itself, is a danger which all must have felt. *Our* shibboleth is very important. It differs from that of others, in that it is vital. The claims of our own denominational interests are ever upon us so imperatively that we are in danger of losing the consciousness and inspiration of the larger Christianity as constituted by all of God's people of whatsoever name. We are, all of us, apt to fancy that we are the people. We are first Baptists, and Congregationalists, and Episcopalians, and Methodists, and Presbyterians, and then, rather incidentally we are Christians. To fall into this error is to lose much which is really valuable and inspirational. In a masterful manner St. Paul meets this spirit in the Church at Corinth. "Therefore let no man glory

in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

Men owe it to themselves and to the great facts of the kingdom of God to enter into this heritage of catholicity. The movement of God's Spirit through the ages, is in larger circles than the thought and sympathy of men.

> "For the love of God is broader
> Than the measure of man's mind,
> And the heart of the Eternal
> Is most wonderfully kind."

Religion rightly has its forms, appropriate, beautiful, impressive. But so to exalt a form of any kind as to make the validity of religion dependent upon that form, is to go contrary to the very genius of Christianity. Hear the word of inspiration on this point. "The letter killeth, but the Spirit maketh alive." I plead for the broader view and for the larger consciousness of a sympathy wide as the workings of God's Spirit and man's need.

Another type of the partial and incomplete as regards religion is found in the Dogmatic Conception. This makes religion consist in the holding of a certain doctrine or a certain series of doctrines.

Let it not be supposed that the words of St. Paul to the jailor at Philippi have been forgotten. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ is an entirely different thing from believing some proposition about Christianity. The one means personal, unconditional surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord and Master; the other may be simply the holding of a mere opinion more or less remotely or positively. John Wesley declared that a Christianity of opinion is no Christianity at all, and that to constitute a man a Christian there must be faith in a Personal Redeemer. "A string of opinions" he told Middleton, "is no more Christian faith, than a string of beads is Christian holiness." Creeds have their place in the development of Christianity, but their chief value to-day is their historic value. They indicate the path by which theology has been brought out at last, like the psalmist, into a large place. They serve a good purpose as mere formulations of opinion. But so far as practical religion is concerned that is not of such a nature as to be preserved by the cold storage process. My point is this: A man may know much about doctrine and Catechism and be altogether lacking in the humane, sympathetic spirit of the Gospel, the vital principle

of true religion. With the hand of a master Ian Maclaren has portrayed this type of modern Pharisee in Lachlan Campbell. You will recall he was a great stickler for the most rigid orthodoxy and yet because his daughter had grown somewhat worldly he could drive her from home and erase her name from the old family Bible and glory in the fact as he showed Margaret Howe what he had done. The strong mother instinct of Margaret Howe was outraged. She turned on him with furious indignation, charging him with being worse than Simon the Pharisee. Thus was he brought to his senses and thereafter kept a light burning in the window at night to assure his daughter of a welcome home. It is a good thing for a man to be able to give a reason for the faith that is within him. But it is an equally essential thing, to say the least, that he should have the milk of human kindness in his heart. "He that hath not the Spirit of Christ is none of His." The Christian religion has its doctrines, marvelous, masterful, matchless, but religion is more than doctrine.

Still another incomplete conception of religion is the Emotional View. This makes religion consist largely in feeling; in a sort of emotional intoxication. It is often expressed in the trite phrase,

"the mountain-top experience." It must be admitted that we have our full share of this in Methodism. Do not misunderstand. Feeling is an important part of the religious life. If the deep fountains of a man's emotional nature are not broken up when he beholds the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the Cross, certainly there is nothing in earth or heaven that will melt such a heart to tenderness. The mountain-top experience, too, is very essential. To climb up to a lofty spiritual altitude and to see new visions of glory in the face of Jesus Christ, is to have new inspiration for life's duties. The soul must ever and anon escape the dusty byways of the low lands and mount up with wings as eagles; that it may run and not be weary; that it may walk and not faint.

But let us follow the mountain-top experience to its conclusion. "Then answered Peter and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here; if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." But Jesus heeds not the wish of His impulsive disciple, but very shortly is found casting a devil out of the young son of a man who appealed to Him earnestly. The mountain-top experience is not an end in itself, but a means toward an end. Its in-

spiration is to be used for the better accomplishment of the work of life.

In a certain Hudson River city lived two men. One of them was a member of the Church. In prayer and testimony he was both fluent and fervent. A new pastor was apt to regard him as one of the pillars in the temple of the Lord. He was worth several thousands of dollars. He had a very fair salary, which was more than doubled by his rentals. He had no one dependent upon him but his wife. Under pressure from the finance committee of the Church, this man wrought himself up into a fit of generosity, under the inspiration of which he subscribed thirteen cents a week to the support of his Lord's Gospel.

The other man made no profession of religion. He lived apart from the Church, and for that he is not to be excused. His income was moderate. He had a good-sized family to care for. He held a mortgage for six hundred dollars on the home of an old colored barber, who shortly after entering into the transaction lost his son, from whom he expected much assistance in paying for his home. Another man held a second mortgage for three hundred dollars against this same property. The poor barber had made up his mind to lose what he had put into

the property, and to be as cheerful as possible under these adverse circumstances. But the old gentleman with the first mortgage went to the other man, with a proposition to surrender his mortgage on condition that the other man do the same. It was agreed to. The mortgages were destroyed, and a clear title made out to the poor unfortunate barber. Now each of these men represented an incomplete type. The first had plenty of religiosity, but little religion. The second can not be excused for his failure to confess Christ before men, but he certainly had the spirit of brotherly kindness, which should characterize every follower of Him who "went about doing good." Religion has its deep inspirational emotions, but religion is more than the mere flow of pious feeling. The world has a right to expect something better from the followers of Him who died upon a cross, than mere emotional gush and froth.

What, then, is religion? In seeking to find the answer to this question we are met by an embarrassment. Religion is the most comprehensive fact of life. It embraces every phase and interest of this mortal existence. It is impossible, therefore, to give a satisfactory definition of the term in a single sentence. The definition of it depends upon the view

point from which it is regarded. To the philosopher, it is a system of thought; to the theologian, it is a body of doctrine; to the moralist, it is a code of ethics; to the historian, it is a world-wide influence—a universal fact which must be accounted for. To the prophet and mystic, it is the life of God in the soul of man. Hence we find numberless definitions of the term, embracing a great variety of conception. Seneca's definition was, "To know God and to imitate Him." Martineau's was, "A belief in a divine mind and will ruling the universe and holding moral relations with mankind." Kant's, "The recognition of our duties as divine commandments." Spinoza's, "The love of God founded on His divine perfections." Schleiermacher declared it to be "neither a knowing nor a doing, but a determination of the feelings." Max Müller says, "Religion consists in the perception of the infinite under such manifestations as are able to influence the moral character of man," while Matthew Arnold conceived of it as "morality tinged with emotion." Bishop Boyd Carpenter in his great work, "The Permanent Elements of Religion," does not attempt to formulate a definition of it, but tells us that he finds three elements common to all systems of religion; viz., dependence, fellowship, and progress.

Now, in view of the foregoing statements, it would be worse than folly to attempt a comprehensive definition of the term. Our text does not attempt it. It is concerned with the subject on its practical side only, and that is the phase of it which interests us at this time. Let the philosopher and the theologian and the moralist, and the historian and the mystic each have his idea of the subject. What does religion mean for us who have entered into life's battle and are trying to do its work? We are rather interested in Robert Louis Stevenson's definition. He tells us: "Religion is a practical affair. It is a rule of life. It is an obligation to do well."

Viewing our text now somewhat critically, we find that in the writer's mind religion, on its practical side, consists in two things, *in doing*, and *in being*.

This epistle is addressed to professed Christians and presupposes that those to whom it is sent have already, through the work of regeneration, "become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust." In order, however, that our message may have the widest possible application and be adapted to each hearer among us, let us reverse the order of the two

great principles of our text, and say that pure and undefiled religion consists in being and in doing—in character and in service. Logically character comes first, and if the appeal of this text had been primarily to the unconverted, there can be little doubt it would have been so placed. Self-realization is the first duty of every member of the human family. The disciples were ordered to tarry at Jerusalem; that is, they were first to attain, and then to achieve. What, then, is a man to be? The text answers he is "to keep himself unspotted from the world." But before he can so keep himself he must be made a new creature in Christ Jesus. His heart must be cleansed; his conscience purged. It was for this high boon that the best minds of antiquity strove, but in vain. How be free from the conscious burden of a guilty soul? The question found no answer until God sent His prophet with the message, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

These words of the prophet found glorious fulfillment that day when Jesus, speaking to an afflicted one, said: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." And this is the message which He has

been speaking to countless souls ever since. Having come then, through the power of the living Christ, to the consciousness of a new life in God, a man, our text says, is "to keep himself unspotted from the world." It is a high standard. Could we but withdraw ourselves from the strife of the world's conflict and hide securely in some isolated mountain monastery, our task would not be so difficult. But there is no faintest suggestion of such an idea here. The world is not to be conquered by running away from it. To do that is cowardly. The New Testament conception for the Christian is that he shall be in the thickest of the world's conflict, waving aloft the banner of his Lord. Entering fully into the rough and tumble of life's varied interests, commercial, educational, social, and political, we are to keep our garments from taint, ourselves unspotted. We are to be in the world, but not of it. Society must be redeemed by Christian men and women whose influence shall be as both salt and leaven in the world's life. What constant renewing of the soul in the divine elements of its life this task requires! And yet through the abundant grace of God it is possible. Edward Eggleston in "The Hoosier Schoolmaster" tells of a poor orphan boy who was in the service of a hard taskmaster. The

new schoolmaster was of gentle, kindly spirit, and the heart of the boy, which was hungry for love, went out instantly to his new-found friend. One evening sitting at his desk in the schoolroom the teacher supposed he was alone, when lifting his eyes he saw the little fellow sitting immediately in front of him. With an implied rebuke he said: "Why, Shocky, have n't you gone home?" Through trembling lips the boy answered: "O! Mr. Ralph, I wanted to stay and talk with you for a minute. I thought if I did, may be God would n't seem quite so far away from me. He did n't after we talked the other day." There are men alive to-day who possess a spirituality so intense and uplifting that they are forever bringing us face to face anew with God. Their very presence breathes of reality. The briefest touch of their lives upon our own, though it be merely casual, some way seems to dispose of all superficial views of life, for the time being, and leaves us thinking about the great eternal verities of our existence. When they have departed we find ourselves unconsciously engaged with duty, with high possibility, with destiny, with immortality, and with God. To weave a charm like this about the hearts of men is better than to found an empire or to make a million. There are multitudes of men

and women in our world who have had a battle so long and so hard, that the honest query of their minds is, "Who is God and where is God, if indeed there be a God at all?" Be it yours and mine to find them out, and by the mystery of the deep Christ life to make them feel that, after all, God is not so far away as they have been accustomed to think.

The idea of Christian service—of doing the will and work of God, is also deeply inwrought into the New Testament teaching. Our Lord emphasized it very strongly in the Sermon on the Mount. "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." And in the closing paragraph he who is likened unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock, is not he who heareth these sayings, neither he that heareth these sayings and believeth them, but "whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and *doeth* them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock." "If ye know these things happy are ye if ye do them." And again in our context we read, "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only." Such passages might be multiplied. It is really surprising that any intelligent reader of the New Testament should fall into the error of anti-

nomianism. Well did the saintly Fletcher employ his rare gifts to check this dangerous teaching. And yet to this day there are men who quote with approval these false and foolish words:

> "Nothing either great or small
> Remains for me to do."

But the text is somewhat specific as to what is to be done. "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction." Why that particularly? And what about other important duties of the Christian life? It will be remembered that this form of beneficence received attention in the early Church. "And in those days when the membership of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration." Now by a figure of speech this particular form of Christian activity is used as signifying the duty of a Christian in all such matters.

What a field the world's need opens up to the highest possibilities of a man's powers of service! The Gospel idea is not that a man shall follow the Christian life as a mere holiday pastime, but that he shall enter into it strenuously with no reservation of strength or talent or possession. Hear the Great Apostle's appeal to the Christians at Rome.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service." Hear, too, his noble confession. "From henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." By this he proclaimed himself the absolute slave of his Lord.

One of our present day writers in highly fanciful strain tells of an artist whose pictures attracted universal attention by their deep red, permanent coloring. His fellow artists found it possible to approximate the high quality of his work, but their colors faded out with time. They began to speculate as to the cause of the difference. They stole unknown into the studio of the great master and examined his materials, but found nothing strange or unusual. They sent to the Far East to see if, perchance, they too might find colors of peculiarly enduring quality, but in vain. Finally they sent one of their representatives to entreat him that he might reveal to them his secret, but he only bowed his head and worked on in silence. One day he died, and when they were preparing his body for burial they found a great calloused sore the size of the palm of a man's hand upon his left breast. It had been pierced and punctured again and again. Then they understood

that he had put his very life blood into his work. This had been his valuable secret. Jesus Christ put His life blood into the world's redemption. But His followers, as a whole, are not doing it to-day. When His Church takes to its heart the type of religion which will secure its life blood, as a living sacrifice, we shall hear no more of the decadence of Christianity in the earth.

To be like Christ then and to perform a ministry such as His, among men is pure and undefiled religion. To attain the highest in character according to the Christ ideal, and to do the most possible for the blessing of mankind, according to the same ideal, this is a practical every-day working creed for practical Christian men. This is the type of religion that the world needs, and it is all that it needs. Make religion consist merely in a form of any kind, and the man who loves reality will turn away from it. Make it consist in a doctrine or a series of doctrines, and the man who has come face to face with the world's woe will spurn it. Make it consist in an emotion, and the practical, hard-headed business man will speak and think of it only with contempt. But make it consist in the reincarnation of the pure, sinless Spirit of Him "who went about doing good,"

and all intelligences, whether in earth or hell or heaven, will confess its charm and power.

> "And so the Word had breath, and wrought
> With human hands the creed of creeds
> In loveliness of perfect deeds
> More strong than all poetic thought;
>
> Which he may read that binds the sheaf,
> Or builds the house, or digs the grave,
> And those wild eyes that watch the wave
> In roarings round the coral reef."

It will be seen that this ideal of religion agrees perfectly with the *résumé* of its substance made by the pen of inspiration, whether in the Old or the New Testament. "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man"—being and doing; character and service. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself"—being and doing; character and service.

In the attainment and realization of this ideal, let every man do his best.

V.

THE HELPING STARS.

"The stars in their courses fought against Sisera."—Judg. v, 20.

THE army of Israel was mustered in the valley of the ancient Kishon. Here a fierce engagement occurred between them and the Canaanites under the leadership of Sisera, one of Canaan's most distinguished warriors. Partly owing to the timely and successful attack of Barak, partly to the impassable condition of the plain, and partly to the unwieldy nature of the army, which contained among other impediments nine hundred iron chariots, a dreadful defeat came to the Canaanites. Sisera was so terror-stricken that he deserted his troops and fled on foot, and very soon thereafter met his death. The reference to the stars would seem to indicate that probably a storm accompanied by rain arose during the progress of the battle, producing a great inundation of the river Kishon and adding to the

dismay of the Canaanites as they attempted to escape. And now that the issue of the battle has been a decisive victory for the army of Israel, they celebrate the event by a noble song of thanksgiving and triumph. Deborah and Barak, who sing this song, conceive that the very stars in their courses have been fighting with them to help defeat their boastful and dangerous enemy. It is a conception quite characteristic of the poetic Oriental mind. Its simple faith, however, and not its poetic fancy, is its most noteworthy feature. Their faith beholds beyond the stars, directing them in their courses and conspiring to bring victory to the hosts of Israel, the hand of the Most High God of Israel. They believe that all the livery and resources of heaven are on their side fighting with and for them against their enemies. It is a magnificent expression, not only of the faith of these two singers, but of the nation's confidence in God.

The truth illustrated by the incident possesses important significance for our own age. The lesson which I wish to draw is that Almighty God, with all the resources throughout His vast universe is and forever must be on the side of right as against every form of evil.

That this truth needs emphasis to-day is very

apparent. The gaunt spectral form of pessimism stalks abroad. We hear its croaking voice from many quarters.

It speaks through the blatant words of the time-serving politician, who boasts that he would rather have the influence of the saloons than that of the Churches in any political campaign.

Every time any practical and far-reaching reform is undertaken, no matter where nor by whom, it is heard decrying the movement in the words, "It is of no use. The powers of evil are so strongly intrenched that they can not be shaken."

It casts its deadly blight upon much of the so-called popular literature of the day. Much of this is so shallow that it does no harm among thinking people, but the trouble is, it falls into the hands of the unthinking, and so ministers to disbelief. It so happens that nothing is quite so certain to secure a large sale for a work of fiction as for the author to deal in some way with the moral aspects of life. It is so because religion is the most living of all themes. It may be truthfully said that it is the stock in trade of the masters. George Eliot's reputation rests more than upon any other one element in her writings, upon her skill in the analysis of character. The power of Hawthorne's "The Scarlet

Letter" is in its vivid portrayal of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" is a strong setting of the twofold nature of man. "Jean Valjean" is a masterful representation of the conflict between the powers of good and evil in the heart of mankind. "Macbeth" and "Hamlet" are fine instances of the same principle. Nearly all great works of fiction deal in some way with the moral elements of life.

These modern times have developed a whole school of writers who, in imitation of the masters and for commercial reasons, attempt to deal with the moral and religious problems of the day. Most of them are not within a thousand miles of the masters. Their equipment for the task is so slender as to render their efforts insipid and in many instances ridiculous. Some of these works which attempt to discuss the foundations of belief are a crime against the growing generation. It is still true, alas! "that fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

The high function of philosophy has also been prostituted to the low pessimistic tendency of our times in the teachings of Schopenhauer, Hartmann, Zola, and others.

And, worst of all, there is a school of morbid literalistic interpreters of the Bible who tell us that

the world is waxing worse and worse; that it is God's fixed purpose and intention to have it do so, and that it will so continue. This is one of the most deadly and the most unpardonable of all modern heresies.

Now the purpose of our discussion to-day is to show that there is no ground for pessimism or discouragement. That was a thrilling experience which came to the servant of God's prophet at Dothan. "And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold an host encompassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my Master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

So may the Lord open our eyes that we may see. And may He put into our nerves something of the fiber of the psalmist's faith as he cried out, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine

enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident."

Within a week a rugged, horny-handed son of toil, who has been through some of life's fiercest battles, arose in our prayer-meeting, and in the course of his splendid testimony said: "There is absolutely no cause for discouragement to any man who believes in a living God and a living Christ." If we stood alone well might we despair, but with God on our side it is criminal even to entertain the thought of failure.

Now I wish to show that God is on the side of right. The truth is clearly seen in nature, in history, and in the workings of the moral law in the souls of men.

It has come to be very generally believed in our day that behind this impersonal manifestation, which we call nature, is an intelligent, knowing First Cause, by whatsoever name He may be designated. Even Herbert Spencer, who started out to construct a thought world upon a purely natural basis, could not get along without the recognition of this truth. In his remote philosophy he may characterize this

cause as a "thinking somewhat," "the unknowable," or by some other vague term if he chooses; but with more of authority, and certainly with far more of common sense, we prefer, with the wisest of all ages, to characterize it as God.

Now in this realm of nature we find that law is everywhere paramount, and that it is beneficent in its workings. People often talk about the violation of the laws of nature as though these laws could be broken any time at the whim or fancy of the most veritable weaklings upon the face of the earth. The fact is that these laws are as fixed and unalterable as the earth's axis, so far as any power given to man is concerned; that man can no more affect one of these laws in the slightest degree than he can influence the heavenly bodies in their movements, as William Arthur has clearly shown in his valuable little book, "Difference Between Physical and Moral Law."

But a man may neglect and ignore these laws, of course, as he may do with any other law. And when he does, no matter who he may be, no matter whether he may do it through ignorance or willfully, they are as inevitable in their workings as the direction of the earth in its motion, and as merciless as the roaring rapids of Niagara.

Go up and down the streets of a great city through the sections where vice holds nightly carnival, where bestiality is rampant. Look into the blear eyes and brutal countenances of the men and women who frequent these ghastly haunts, and it will immediately become as clear as daylight that "Almighty God writes a plain hand," as some one has well said. Look upon the children of a drunken parentage, and you will find written there, as well as in the Book of Exodus, that "God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." These laws of nature kept, are "gentle as a nursing mother; broken, they are more terrible than an angry giant." Everywhere upon the face of nature the Great God has written his approval of the law of right in letters of living flame.

What is true of nature is equally true of history. Voltaire and Gibbon declared that history is only the register of the crimes and misfortunes of men. But James A. Garfield said that "the world's history is a divine poem whose strains have been pealing along down the centuries; that though there have been mingled the discords of warring cannon and dying men, yet to the Christian philosopher and historian—the humble listener—there has been a divine

melody running through the song, which speaks of hope and halcyon days to come."

If we enter this field with eye open for the moral, we shall clearly discern a power making for righteousness on the great scale and on the small. In the olden time it was written: "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people." Every nation upon earth from the beginning of history until the present, as it has been busily working out its destiny, has, at the same time unconsciously, been connotating that old passage of Scripture for the encouragement and inspiration of men who believe in God. This power which makes for righteousness decides the fate of nations absolutely upon the basis of their regard or disregard of the law of right. Behold Volney on the eve of the French Revolution, sitting among the ruins of Palmyra, and finding in those ruins the emblem of what had befallen all the great historical nations of antiquity in the East. And still more remarkable is it to find in Matthew Arnold's "Literature and Dogma" such impassioned emphasis as this upon the words of doom uttered by God's prophets in the olden time: "Down they come, one after another; Assyria falls, Babylon, Greece, Rome; they all fall for want of conduct in righteousness. . . . Judea itself, the

holy land, the land of God's Israel, falls too, and falls for want of righteousness. Look a little deeper, and you will see that one strain runs through it all: nations and men, whoever is shipwrecked, is shipwrecked on conduct. Brilliant Greece perished for lack of attention to conduct, for want of conduct, steadiness, character." When a man like Matthew Arnold can bring us such a testimony concerning the vindication of righteousness upon the field of history, certainly it is time to fling our doubt and discouragement to the winds.

What a source of strength it would be to the Church if it could only fully realize that God is consummating His high purposes as surely as time speeds onward. How happens it that we do not see this more clearly? I am persuaded it is largely because we do not view the factors in the case with sufficient comprehensiveness. We do not take the long look backward through all the centuries as we should. Judgments based on a few events or on the facts of a few years are not trustworthy. A careful study of the history of all the Christian centuries will clearly reveal the fact that,

"Through the ages one increasing purpose runs."

Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" and Carlyle's "History of the French Revolu-

tion" introduce us to the long look into history. The former extends over more than a thousand years. And we read clearly between the lines, penned by its author that "there is a God that judgeth in the earth."

If we did but recognize the fact, the centuries, as they have fallen "like grains of sand" from the hand of the Great Creator, have rendered their final verdict concerning some very important questions. The question of infanticide is settled forever; so is that of the compulsory degradation of woman as a mere chattel, as is also the question of human slavery.

The Christian sentiment of our own times is crystallizing for the formulation of its sentence of condemnation upon other great public evils. Some day we shall hear a righteous, scathing and final verdict upon the shameless iniquities of inordinate greed, of the organized crimes of vice and intemperance, and of selfishness in all its varied forms. Some day, too, we shall have a final manifesto in regard to the unreasonableness and inhumanity of war between man and man. Nor is faith disturbed in the least, in the utterance of these sentiments by roar of cannon and flash of bayonet from across the seas.

The violation of the law of right meets its pen-

alty as inevitably in history as in nature. The same God presides over both realms and fully vindicates Himself in each. Human shortsightedness may boast for a time that God is with the force whose armament is strongest; but the divine drift of the ages teaches us the wiser lesson, that that force is strongest which has God and right for its armament. In the dark days of the Civil War, it is said a company of ministers waited on the great Lincoln with the request that he appoint a day of prayer for God's aid to "our side." With characteristic penetration he answered, "Gentlemen, there is another question in which I am more deeply interested. I am not so much concerned that God should aid our side, as I am that we should make sure of being on God's side."

This is the true philosophy. The man who fails to discover it, and to build upon it, does not possess the first qualification for statesman, reformer, teacher, or preacher.

"And the Lord of Right still sits on His throne, still wields
His scepter and rod,
And the winds and the waves and the years move on, doing
the will of God."

But if God vindicates His righteous law in nature and in history, certainly He does so with equal force to the conscience and judgment of the indi-

vidual. The adaptation of God's moral law to the needs of human nature is perfect. The great Kant said: "Two things fill my soul with an admiration and a veneration, ever new and ever increasing: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me. I am not compelled to look for these two grand sights through the covering of a mysterious obscurity, nor to ascertain them vaguely through an infinite distance. I contemplate them immediately before me; they are bound to the very consciousness of my being. The one, the visible heaven, begins at the very point of the universe where I am, and widens around me in circles of worlds, in systems of systems, up to the infinitude in spaces and of times in which these worlds are situated. The other, the moral law, equally starts from my invisible self; it places me in the midst of the intellectual universe, that other infinitude with which my personality stands in a necessary relation."

In similar strain Samuel T. Coleridge, certainly one of the mostly keenly penetrating minds of the day in which he lived, declared a clear conscience to be absolutely necessary to the best results in the intellectual life. Thus does the keenest philosophical acumen recognize the perfect adaption of the

law of righteousness to the broadest and deepest self-realization.

The witness of a man's spirit to the perfect benignity of the moral law is strong and conclusive, as that law enters into the deepest recesses of his being and determines the course of his life. As by its high divine requirements, he finds the deep fountain of his affections purified; as he finds his will ever and always constrained to the law of right; as he discovers a growing inclination to form all his judgments according to the highest ethical standards; as he sees his imagination held captive by the things which are pure, and lovely and of good report; as he discovers every thought, being brought into obedience to the law of Christ and begins to discern the possibility of the unfolding of his life into the fair flower of holiness to God, he feels that he has at last arrived at that environment for which his noblest being was intended. He has at last come to life's true worth while. Reason, judgment, conscience, and will unite with every instinct of a man's being to establish him in this position. He comes to see that every withholding of himself from the behests of the law of God, militates by so much against the working out of the noblest ends of his existence. It is hard for him to kick against the pricks.

Thus as a man looks into the depths within, he reads clearly the same truth written upon the stars in the depths above; viz., that our God is a God that loveth righteousness and hateth wickedness.

The stars in their courses fought against Sisera. Nature, history and consciousness all bear witness that Almighty God with all His infinite resources is fighting for the final triumph of right in the earth. St. Paul puts it magnificently in the Epistle to the Romans: "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the Sons of God." "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." That the enemies of God and His Kingdom are finally to be overthrown, is as certain as God Himself. For, "if God be for us, who can be against us?" This is the . . . "one far-off Divine event to which the whole creation moves."

Away then with the senseless, shallow claims of pessimism! The true philosophy of life and of the world is optimism.

There are those who find it difficult to go with Leibnitz in his teaching that this is the best possible world, and who, not wishing to class themselves with the pessimists, tell us that they are meliorists; that they believe in a world which is susceptible of improvement, or which is actually

improving. They have accepted this compromise philosophy between the two extremes as introduced by George Eliot. If we emphasize the actual conditions of life to-day, we can not, indeed, pronounce this, the best possible world. But if we think of God's great scheme of redemption through Christ and of the abundant provision which He has thus made for the attainment of His ideal for it, then may we accept the doctrine of Leibnitz, that this is the best possible world. Indeed is it not a lack of faith to suppose that God would make any other than the best possible? In order to become such, the world has only to avail itself of the provision at hand in the infinite grace of the Heavenly Father.

It is a great and significant fact that Jesus Christ who saw the world's need as it has never been seen through other eyes, and who felt the bitterness of its woe as it has never been felt by other heart, yet stands before us the supreme optimist of the ages.

"The year 's at the spring
And day 's at the morn;
Morning 's at seven;
The hillside 's dew-pearled;
The lark 's on the wing;
The snail 's on the thorn;
God 's in His heaven—
All 's right with the world!"

VI.

THE ANSWER TO LIFE'S PROBLEMS.

"O that I knew where I might find Him!"—Job xxiii, 3.

It is clear from our text that Job's sufferings had not been in vain. Like other afflicted men, Job would have been glad to have the meaning of it all interpreted to him. At first he is respectful and attentive to hear the words of his would-be comforters. Perchance he may find in them an explanation of the mysteries of God's providence and government of the world. But he soon discovers that there is only the "darkening of counsel by words without knowledge." Having listened in vain for a word to enlighten his mind and comfort his heart, he pours out his soul's disgust in two of the finest pieces of sarcasm found anywhere in all the world's literature. "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you. But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior

to you; yea, who knoweth not such things as these? I am as one mocked of his neighbors."

"I have heard many such things; miserable comforters are ye all. Shall vain words have an end? Or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest? I also could speak as ye do: if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you. But I would strengthen you with my mouth and the moving of my lips would assuage your grief. Though I speak my grief is not assuaged: and though I forbear, what am I eased?"

It is likewise clear that Job had struggled very earnestly for himself to find a philosophy of his sufferings. It could not be otherwise. Job was a natural man. The mind always urges to know the reason why, when the heart must suffer. Job's trial was made the more bitter by the attitude of those nearest to him in his trouble. His wife said unto him, "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God and die." He resents the suggestion with indignation. Manfully he replies, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?"

Through all the bitter agonizing of his spirit

there is one aspect of the case which contains some promise. If he could only lay the affair before God he seems to think that therein he might find some relief. "Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with Him." With desperate confidence he declares "though he slay me, yet will I trust Him." But he makes little or no progress towards a rational theory of his troubles. He finds no standing ground. Fully persuaded at last of the utter emptiness of the words of his intruders and of the futility of his own efforts in his searching after a philosophy, he cries out, "O that I knew where I might find Him!" Chastened and disciplined by his experience of bitterness, Job thus at last had found the deepest truth of the philosophy of life and the largest and most comforting assurance of faith. Thereafter he could say with magnificent boldness, "Till I die, I will not remove mine integrity from me."

The finite mind of man may not with reason expect to be possessed of that keen penetration which will enable him perfectly to understand and interpret in detail, the unfoldings of the mind of the infinitely wise God, in His government of the affairs of this life. But he who finds God rightly has found the answer, not simply to some trying and

peculiar dispensation, but to all the problems of this mortal existence. We meet the statement of this noble principle in St. Paul's letter to Timothy, "I know whom I have believed." St. Paul banked everything on God. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews asserts it as the vital principle of a true faith, "He that cometh to God must believe that He is." It is the great divine integrity underlying the world and the whole of life. Whittier puts it well:

> "Yet in the maddening maze of things,
> And tossed by storm and flood,
> To one fixed trust my spirit clings,
> I know that God is good."

It was the answer to Job's problem. It is the answer to the problems of to-day. Now I wish to show that this is true in several definite particulars.

Really to find God, is to find the answer to the world's problem of sin. The fact of sin has ever been regarded as the contradiction of creation. It has been quite generally assumed and believed that the existence of moral evil in the world can not be reconciled with the fact of a good God. And yet it remains true that this is God's world in the sense that it is His creation and that it is a world in which moral evil exists. This has been regarded as the Gordian Knot of all the ages. And yet may not

wisdom be justified of her children? It were folly within the necessary limits of a sermon to attempt the discussion of this problem in any sense exhaustively. But the statement of a few fundamental facts may prove helpful to both reason and faith even in this dark region.

It is always helpful to remember that character in man is the end of all God's enterprises directed earthward; that the divine process of world-building is instinct with purpose and that man is in view throughout. But in order to character, there must be choice, for character in its final analysis resides in choice. There can be no character without choice. As Savonarola says, "If there be no enemy, no fight; if no fight, no victory; if no victory, no crown." Hence if man is to be man and not a mere automaton, there must be an alternative as between the principles of good and evil. Hence the alternative placed before man in his first Eden home. Hence also the call, "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." And so it becomes a question as to whether this shall be a world with such a being as man to crown it with the dignity and glory of his voluntary choice of good, or a world with man omitted. Says

Bruce in "The Providential Order," "Better the human with all its possible tragedy than a world with man left out of it." And though its consummation seems remote and undiscernible now still is it not possible to say with Tennyson,

> "O yet we trust that somehow good
> Will be the final goal of ill?"

In any event the fact of God is the answer to the problem arising out of the fact of sin, though God is in no sense the author of sin.

In a more practical sense, God is the answer to the problem of evil in the world, in that He has provided a practical and efficient remedy for it in the salvation through Christ. God has no problems of thought or of knowledge as has man. He dwells ever in an atmosphere of light. But the conquest of the hearts of men by the power of love is a problem even to God. This is the problem which He is working out in the Gospel; the problem in the solution of which He makes us His co-workers. To us it seems a slow work. But God is solving it and will do it completely. Sin abounds, but grace much more abounds. The race has proved a great sinner, but Jesus Christ will prove a greater Savior.

> "Lord, I believe were sinners more
> Than sands upon the ocean shore,
> Thou hast for all a ransom paid,
> For all a full atonement made."

Our text also supplies the answer to our manifold individual problems of perplexity, sorrow, and conflict. To find God is the answer to many of the perplexities of life on the intellectual side. The fact of God is as essential to the reason as to the moral nature of man. There can be no rational philosophy without postulating Him as the support of the world and of life. Fitz James Stephen in "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," says "What do you think of yourself? What do you think of the world? These questions are riddles of the Sphinx and in some way or other we must deal with them. In all important transactions in life we have to take a leap in the dark. . . . We stand on a mountain pass in the midst of a whirling snow and blinding mist, through which we get a glimpse now and then of paths which may be deceptive. If we stand still we shall be frozen to death. If we take the wrong road we shall be dashed to pieces. We do not certainly know whether there is any right one. What must we do? 'Be strong and of a good courage.' Act for the best, hope for the best and take what comes. . . . If death ends all we can not meet death better."

If no better philosophy of life than this were possible, then indeed, is it hollow at the core. It

can not be true that this is the best attainable view of our mortal existence. It is not true. With God revealed we are not like men deserted in a deep mountain pass in the dead of winter. The telescope of faith reveals the great God above us. How comforting to turn away from the barren speculations of an agnostic philosophy to the clear strong words of those who have found and known God! "It is enough for me," says Hannah Whitall Smith, "to say 'God is' and I have the answer to every possible difficulty. Every fear, every perplexity, every anxiety find an all-satisfying answer in God himself, what He is in nature and character. His ways, or His plans, or even His promises, we may misinterpret or misunderstand, but goodness of character we can not mistake, and it is the character of God that is our resting place."

In what marked contrast with the sentiments of the distinguished English jurist just quoted, are these words from the pen of Rev. John Parker, a deceased minister of our own communion!

"God holds the key of all unknown,
And I am glad;
If other hands should hold the key,
Or if He trusted it to me,
I might be sad.

What if to-morrow's cares were here,
Without its rest?
I 'd rather He unlock the day,
And, as the hours swing open, say,
'Thy will is best.'

The very dimness of my sight
Makes me secure,
For groping in my misty way
I feel His hand, I hear Him say,
'My help is sure.'

I can not read His future plan,
But this I know—
I have the smiling of His face,
And all the refuge of His grace,
While here below.

Enough; this covers all my want,
And so I rest;
For what I can not He can see,
And in His care I sure shall be
Forever blest."

And how assuring still to hear the psalmist say, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want;" and to read again the promise, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths;" and to listen again to St. Paul's confidence that nothing can separate us from the love of God. Those who have found God have found Him to be the answer to these manifold questions and perplexities.

To adjust one's self rightly to a heart-breaking sorrow is one of the most difficult undertakings in

life. The spirit of the world says at such a time, "Immerse yourself in secular work." "Seek a change of scene;" in other words, "forget." Such advice is not only shallow; it is brutal. Who that ever loved indeed, would forget if he could? The very suggestion of it is an insult to the soul's finer sensibilities. Now there is but one cure for the anguish of a heart broken by grief and that is God. He who turns away from God at such a time, turns away from the only true source of help. To cultivate God diligently, to come to know Him better, to feel more and more deeply assured that He is the underlying fact of this life and the great eternal reality in all that lies beyond, that is to find the real cure for sorrow. He who finds God at such a time finds the full and complete answer to his soul's need. Let the realization of God fill the spirit's horizon and sorrow will be swallowed up of joy. God becomes the guarantee of the safety of loved ones gone before and the sure pledge of reunion with them in heaven. A devout Christian of our own day says in this connection, "I found that God, just God alone, without anything else was enough. Even the comfort of His promises pales before the comfort of Himself."

But why is life forever beset with conflict, with

struggle? God is the answer to the question. The end of it all is that man may be made into God's likeness. The attainment of the divine is the goal of humanity. And the pathway to perfection lies through struggle, through conflict. Even our Lord "learned obedience by the things which He suffered."

And thus as in the knowledge of God we see the complex elements of life consummating in these lofty purposes, with quietness of spirit we say with Browning,

> "Then welcome each rebuff
> That turns earth's smoothness rough,
> Each sting that bids not sit nor stand, but go!
> Be our joy three parts pain!
> Strive and hold cheap the strain
> Learn, nor account the pang; dare never grudge the throe."

The answer which our text gives to the problems of life is the answer given by the character and teachings of our Lord, and this fact fully confirms the opinion that it is the true answer. In the first recorded utterance which we have of Jesus, he declares that he is in the world in behalf of the Father. There is a whole group of passages in the Gospel according to St. John which contain a deeper meaning than appears upon the surface. In them

our Lord declares that he came not to seek his own will, but the will of the Father, which had sent him; that he is come in the Father's name: There was a deep significance in the name, in Scripture times. It signified the nature, the character. And so the deep truth is conveyed that Christ came bearing the revelation of the Father's character in Himself, "being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person." He could say to Philip, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Our Lord went about the fulfillment of his mission with this as the basal principle, that his supreme work was to reveal God. He seems to have considered that if he could get men to see and know God, all other issues would thereby be solved. This comes out with great force in his immortal prayer recorded in St. John xvii. "I have glorified Thee on the earth. I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." And then as if to explain what that work was, he says, "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world." "The name of God," says Professor Thayer, in his "Greek-English New Testament Lexicon," is used for all those qualities which to His worshipers are summed up in that name and by

which God makes Himself known to men; it is therefore equivalent to His divinity, the divine majesty and perfections."

So fundamental is this work that it is the very eternal life itself. "And this is life eternal that they might know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." It is with this agonizing wish in his soul that our Lord closes His great prayer. "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee; but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have declared unto them Thy name and will declare it; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them and I in them." It is the clear revelation of the character of God which differentiates the work of Jesus from that of all other teachers, and which makes it of supreme and everlasting value. He quiets the hearts of men and solves the intricate problems of life by bringing in the realization of God. The Gospel is the complete and perfect answer to the cry of Job, "O that I knew where I might find Him!"

This supreme of all blessings is ever being given anew to the children of God who earnestly seek it. There are times when we are not sure that the peti-

tions of our prayers are according to the will of God. But we may always be sure with absolute confidence that God is ever ready to bestow upon us the greatest of all blessings, the gift of Himself. It rests upon the authority of our Lord's word. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"

Exiled from his loved city of Florence, Dante exclaimed, "The means of life will not fail me. In any case I shall be able to gaze upon the sun and stars, and to meditate upon the sweetest truths of philosophy." This was enough, but the Christian has something far better.

A distinguished Frenchman who had fortune and friends swept away in a single night was asked, "What is left in life?" He answered heroically, "Myself and God." This blessing of God Himself which He giveth to all who will receive it, is the blessing that maketh rich, for in this is all peace, all power, all beauty, all hope, all joy, all light, all life, all love. It is the crowning of humanity with the "depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God."

And so to-day, we agonize not with Job in the cry, "O that I knew where I might find Him!" but "we speak that we do know and testify that we have seen" and declare with deepest joy and gratitude, We have found Him, and in finding Him we have found the answer to all life's problems.

VII.

THE CLIMAX OF LIFE.

"We should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world."—Titus ii, 12.

We read in our context, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Our text sets forth the order of the soul's development Godward. It gives us the picture of the ascending climax of the Christian life. It finds the beginning of it in a spirit of serious sober-mindedness. The word soberly is not used in the modern sense of abstinence from intoxicants, but in the

deeper sense of thoughtfulness. "Thoughtfully" would perhaps better convey the idea of the original.

One of the fundamental problems of the Church is to get men to think, to duly consider the great issues of this present life. Countless multitudes simply drift along through the years heedless; thoughtless of the meaning of life, of its high possibilities and destiny. How important, how essential the word or act which will shock the dead spirits of men into spiritual consciousness and lead to their souls' awakening! The Scriptures recognize very clearly, the vital relation which a man's thought bears to his character. Hear the call of the evangelical prophet to the unrepentant: "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his *thoughts:* and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God for He will abundantly pardon." Hear the word of wisdom as it comes to us from afar. "For as *he thinketh* in his heart, so is he." Hear, too, the apostle as he exhorts the Christians at Philippi: "Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think* on these

things." Hear him, too, to the Corinthians, "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every *thought* to the obedience of Christ." Hear our Lord also in the Parable of the Prodigal Son: "And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" It is the picture of a man set to thinking.

George Eliot declared that nearness to death makes us see things as they are. Some day every human being will have to face life's reality. How much better then that a man should do it at once and so upon the real as its foundation, build the superstructure of his character!

"The key to every man," says Emerson, "is his thought." "Nature is subdued to what it works in, like the dyer's hand," declares Shakespeare. "Give me a great thought that I may feed upon it," cried another great man. "If you wish to alter the destiny of a people, you have only to alter its ideas; doctrines are sown in the soil of the mind; they are ripened by the sun of the centuries; they spring up in action." So said Père Felix, the great French preacher. It is said that when the soul of Justin

Martyr began to long for God, he sought advice from the representative philosophers of his times. The Stoic told him it was foolish. The Peripatetic asked him for a fee, and so disgusted him. The Pythagorean sent him away because he knew so little of music and mathematics. But the Platonist told him to think, and to do nothing else until he should find God. Wandering by the seashore, whither he had gone to meditate, he met an old man who called his attention to the Christian revelation. Justin began to study it. The more he studied, the more his soul was enchanted. He yielded his life absolutely to its charm and power. He became an earnest advocate of its doctrines, and finally a martyr in the cause of its truth.

Christianity awakens the dormant powers of the intellect and furnishes the loftiest themes for the mind's contemplation. It proposes to go so deeply into a man's being as to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. It allures the soul by its majestic truths, and invites man to think God's thoughts. Martineau has expressed it beautifully: "God thinking out His eternal thoughts on lines that descend to us, from cause to law, from law to fact, from fact to sense; and we counting our way back with laboring steps, from what we feel to

what we see, and from what is to what must be, till we meet Him in the eternal fields, where all minds live on the same aliment of the ever true and the ever good."

No other such thought life is possible as that which is offered to the followers of the Son of God.

But a man is not to dwell upon the themes of the Christian revelation in simply a general and impersonal fashion. They make their appeal to the conscience and to the will. Every truth herein contained has personal significance to the individual. And so when by earnest thought a man relates these great truths to his own being, there is awakened within him the desire to attain a standard of excellence, to embody in his life and impersonate in his character the truths which have commanded his admiration. The spirit of thoughtfulness will reveal to him the disparity between the actuality of his life and its ideal possibility, and so beget within him the aspiration to live righteously.

Now righteously simply means rightly. That is that a man shall admit into the formation of his character, the things that are right. How tenaciously men insist upon this in pursuit of their chosen business and profession in life. The engineer must be assured that everything is in perfect

order before he pulls the throttle-valve; the watchmaker demands an exactness like unto the nicety of the solar system's mechanism before jointing part to part; the builder must know that joint fits joint exactly before entering upon the work of construction; the artist pays strict attention to blending, proportion and perspective in the painting of the picture; the pleader before the jury builds his argument carefully, giving attention to cumulative and climactic effect; the conscientious preacher feels that he has in no sense performed his duty until he has given due heed to the laws of style, that his message may prove as winsome and effectual as possible. It seems to be taken for granted that men ought to do their work well. It is with more difficulty that we persuade them of the importance of building their lives well. It is an easy thing to make a living. It is a divine thing to make a life, to build a character and to do it well.

But what is it to live righteously. A standard is necessary. In the Old Testament times, this standard was given by God in the law of the Ten Commandments. But God was not content to have His ideals of righteousness written simply upon tablets of stone. He wanted to see the flower of righteousness unfolding in human life, to see it be-

come a vital dynamic force in the affairs of the world. It is as if a great botanist having analyzed and classified the different species of flowers should now collect the seeds of the various species and plant them in a beautiful garden. Walking in the midst of their beauty and perfume he finds the actual practical realization of all his theoretic knowledge.

Thus it pleased God to make the desert of this world's life rejoice and blossom with the rose of righteousness. And so the righteous precepts of the law must be taken from dead tablets and made actual, potential in the lives of men. Hence there is progress in revelation, improvement, and perfecting in God's method of instructing the race. St. Paul sets this forth in a splendid passage in the letter to the Romans: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." And so the end of the gift of Christ is that "the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us."

Every realization of the ideal of righteousness in the lives of men deserves commendation. The

inhospitable attitude of some pulpits towards a high type of morality in the characters of men who are not professing Christians is unwarranted. As the ground of salvation primarily, of course, such morality does not possess saving value, but as the attainment of a praiseworthy virtue, it deserves approval. Old-fashioned honesty and square dealing are not so abundant in the earth that the pulpit can afford to be ungracious toward these virtues wherever they may appear. It is a splendid thing to say of a man that his word is as good as his bond.

One of the poorest women in our community bore this testimony the other day in regard to a local business man: "I can go into his place of business at any time and buy what I want with my eyes shut, and be sure of getting good quality, good weight, and good value." May God multiply his kind. He stands before us, not only as an honest man, but also as a Christian. And this leads me to say that the Gospel method of making men righteous is the best that has ever been devised. In the historic life of our Lord it holds before us a perfect example, and in his mystic indwelling presence we have the impetus and inspiration to the realization of that divine ideal. This method of the Gospel is the embodiment of a deep philosophical principle.

It is by the establishment of the law of right in the heart of a man, at the very center and core of his being, by the enthronement of the personal, righteous Christ that the power is given for the unfolding of a man's character according to the high standard of God's law of righteousness.

When God would have Moses build a tabernacle for the worship of His name, He took him up into a mountain and showed him a plan of it, saying unto him, "See, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount." So in the life of our Lord we have a perfect pattern, a faultless realization of the ideal of righteousness, not written simply upon tablets of stone, but concreted in the personality of a living man, moving among his fellows in human earthly relationship. Well is it for him who, in the building of his own character, makes all things according to the pattern revealed in this high mountain of ideality.

But our text teaches us that there is yet another step in the soul's progress towards perfection. It is expressed in the word Godly in our text. Now what is the essential attribute of godliness? We know God in the gift of Christ better than in any other revelation which He has made of Himself. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten

Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This was the great crowning act of God's disposition to give. But it was not His first act of giving. He has been doing that always. It has been His habit from everlasting. It is His nature. He made all worlds to give them away. He created the light and dispenses all the benefits of His bountiful providence for the blessing of His creatures. The coming of God's Son is the answer to that side of God's nature which demanded that it should go outside itself for the blessing of His creature. And in the gift of Christ He gives something deeper and richer than any of the blessings of His bounty. In this He imparts to man His own nature; makes us partakers of His own life. Not content to give all that He has made, He at last gives Himself, all that He is. The fullness of what God is, is in the Gospel offered to man as the crowning blessing of his being. God is the perfect eternal impersonation of the spirit of altruism. Self-giving, in whole-hearted sacrifice for the blessing of others, is the essential attribute of godliness.

Our Lord declared, "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father," and the unfolding of his life in these earthly relationships, is the translation into

human language and the illustration in human action before the eyes of men and of angels, of this essential principle of godliness.

Prophecy so foresaw and foretold him: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth."

Our Lord's own interpretation of His mission confirms this teaching. "For the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many."

Those who best understood the spirit of His life tell us the same thing. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." Bearing burdens was not simply one of the laws of His life. It was *the law* of His life. And this is the definite, concrete, practical illustration of the essential and eternal characteristic of godliness.

Now the call to us, is a call to live the same kind of life which He lived; to find the climax of

our being in a Christly, Godly sacrificial service to our fellow-men.

The world advances towards its divine goal in proportion as the law of self-giving enters into its life. The principle is clearly grasped by the wisest teachers of the race. "Who lives for humanity, must be content to lose himself," says Frothingham. "The great foundation of civil virtue is self-denial," declared Steele. "Teach self-denial and make its practice pleasurable, and you create for the world a destiny more sublime than ever issued from the brain of the wildest dreamer," wrote Sir Walter Scott. "The lives of men who have been always growing are strewed along their whole course with the things they have learned to do without," said the eloquent Phillips Brooks.

Lacordaire adds, "There is nothing fruitful except sacrifice." "The first lesson in Christ's school is self-denial," wrote Matthew Henry. Each of these sentiments is but the echo of that great saying of our Lord, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it."

And this law finds its supreme illustration in earth in the character of our Lord, and it is His spirit which keeps it operative in the world to-day.

Henry Drummond in "The Ascent of Man," has shown how the law is related to the development of the lower orders of the world's life. Benjamin Kidd, in "Social Evolution," tells us that the spirit of altruism born of the Gospel, is the principle of the world's progress towards better social conditions. We can not agree with him in his teaching however, that reason withholds its approval from the practical demand for altruism. We can not believe that God's truth-world is so askew that there is a clash between the highest reason and the highest duty. Reason goes more deeply into the moral aspects of life than is ofttimes supposed. It is worse than folly for a man to attempt either to live to himself or to die to himself. But we agree fully with the teaching which gives large place to the spirit of altruism in the world's advance toward the light. This principle is gaining recognition as never before in the world's history, and is due to Christianity. In his "History of Rationalism" Lecky says: "The history of self-sacrifice during the last eighteen hundred years has been mainly the history of the action of Christianity upon the world. Ignorance and error have no doubt often directed the heroic spirit into wrong channels, . . . but it is the moral type and beauty, the enlarged con-

ceptions and persuasive power of the Christian faith, that have chiefly called it into being; and it is by their influence alone that it can be permanently maintained."

In his "St. Paul and Protestantism," Matthew Arnold pays high tribute to the spirit of sacrifice as emanating from Jesus in a contrast which he draws between Socrates and Jesus. He says: "Socrates inspired boundless friendship and esteem; but the inspiration of reason and conscience is the one inspiration which comes from him and which impels us to live righteously as he did. A penetrating enthusiasm of love, sympathy, pity, adoration, re-enforcing the inspiration of reason and duty, does not belong to Socrates. With Jesus it is different. On this point it is needless to argue; history has proved. In the midst of errors the most prosaic, the most immoral, the most unscriptural, concerning God, Christ and righteousness, the immense emotion of love and sympathy inspired by the person and character of Jesus has had to work almost by itself alone for righteousness; and it has worked wonders."

It is perfectly clear that the men who have grasped this great principle and built their lives upon it, are the men whose influence upon the world

has been most highly redemptive. In the fulfillment of its divine behests hear the apostle exclaim, "Neither count I my life dear unto myself." Listen to John Knox as he cries, "Give me Scotland or give me death." See Wesley leading a life which for intensity beggars description, letting us into the secret sense of obligation which holds him in the saying, "The world is my parish!" Behold Livingstone with Africa, Paton with the South Seas, and Thoburn with India on his heart.

The very blood of life is the price of the world's redemption. This is the meaning of the cross. God has accepted it as a fact and adopted it as His method, and His Church must both accept and adopt it before it can successfully fulfill its Lord's mission. In its life it must place less emphasis upon ease and pleasure and luxury, and must press to its very heart the Cross of its crucified Redeemer. Then, and not until then, can this world be saved. A man's life and the Church's effort, do not really become aggressively and powerfully redemptive until they become wholly sacrificial.

We have sometimes heard the lament that the day for a great career in our country is past. But what a career the ascending climax of our text offers to the sons and daughters of earth. It is the

invitation to them to think God's thoughts mighty and majestic; to enter into the divine ideal of righteousness and attain unto it; but best of all to participate in the very motive and purposes of God's heart which impelled Him to give His Son for the world's redemption. "To live," said Amiel, "is to achieve a perpetual triumph." What a field for perpetual triumph the world's need offers to a man, who takes this spirit of godliness as the law and passion of his life! Here is God's offer of a career in a field as broad and boundless as His own benign purposes in redemption and as deep in its motive as the ocean of His love.

To live soberly—the life of the Christian—this is inspirational. To live righteously by the lofty standards of the divine law,—this is to be approved by the highest judgment. But to live godly, the life of self-abandonment,—this is to be thrilled with the blessedness which was Christ's own. "Who for joy that was set before Him," the joy of suffering for the world's redemption, "endured the cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

May that transcendent joy be yours and mine.

VIII.

METHODISM'S RESPONSIBILITY TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD.*

"The Spirit is life."—Rom. viii, 10.

It has been said that the true measure of a man's responsibility is his ability to respond. What is true of the individual man is equally true of any association of men. And in seeking to determine Methodism's responsibility to the Kingdom of God, we can not do better than to estimate that responsibility by its ability to respond.

This grave responsibility grows chiefly out of three things: 1. The Greatness of Methodism's History; 2. Its High Ideals; and 3. Its Advantageous Relation to Present-day Life and Thought.

Methodism's Great History.

We may well take into account the response which Methodism has already given to the world's need. No man can study the movement in its be-

* Delivered before the New York Preachers' Meeting, January 18, 1904.

ginnings and development without being made aware that it belongs to the order of giants among all the forces of history. The spirit of the Lion of the tribe of Judah lives and breathes in it.

Never since the beginning of the Christian era did the dawning light of a new and better day fall upon a darkness more deep and dense, than that which had settled down over England when Methodism began its career of conquest. The times were degenerate in the extreme.

The English Court, declares a well-known writer, was "a royal brothel." The prevailing philosophy of the day was Deism, and it had so paralyzed the faith of the nation that Bishop Butler thus states his reason for writing his Analogy: "It has come to be taken for granted that Christianity is no longer a subject of inquiry; but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly it is treated as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all persons of discernment, and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject for mirth and ridicule." The clergy had become a pleasure-seeking, luxury-living, godless class of aristocrats. The celebrated jurist, Blackstone, had the curiosity, early in the reign of George III, to go from church to church to hear every clergyman

of note in London. He assures us that he heard not a single discourse which had more Christianity in it than the writings of Cicero; and that it would have been impossible for him to discover from what he heard whether the preacher was a follower of Confucius, of Mohammed, or of Christ. "The religion of the realm," says Dr. Austin Phelps, "was Christianity without Christ." A distinguished writer describes the close of the old century and the dawn of the new "as a starless night, followed by a dewless morn."

Into these despairing conditions came John Wesley with the Gospel's blessed evangel of hope for all men.

Probably the greatest immediate result of the labors of Wesley would be considered the saving of England from the nameless horrors of the French Revolution. The more remote consequences constitute, in a large measure, the story of the triumphs of Christianity from that day until the present. Speaking of the influence of John Wesley, President Woodrow Wilson, of Princeton University, in his address at Wesleyan University last summer said: "There is a deep fascination in this mystery of what one man may do to change the face of his age. Unquestionably this man altered and in his

day governed the spiritual history of England and the English-speaking race on both sides of the sea."

Stevens says: "Had the French Revolution broken out a half century earlier, there can hardly be a doubt that its corrupt political and moral ideas would have proved extremely dangerous, if not fatal, to England. The imbruted masses were fitted to be the victims of demagogues and the instruments of rebellion. But, fortunately for the country, the mobs that opposed Methodism for successive years had been conquered and reclaimed by it, and the impartial historian may not deem it extravagant to assert that the great evangelical movement which, within and without the Establishment, had for two generations, been rescuing the neglected populace, saved England in this greatest emergency of the political world."

As to the more remote achievements of Methodism, many most generous tributes have been spoken by distinguished writers and scholars outside our own communion. Such words coming from us would have made us liable to the charge of boastfulness.

It is certainly a most remarkable thing that the humble scene in Aldersgate Street should be so

glorified by a man of Mr. Lecky's attainments, that he should declare the event to be the beginning of a new epoch in English history.

Dean Stanley said at the unveiling of the tablet in Westminster Abbey, in 1870, to the memory of John and Charles Wesley, that they "preached those great effects which have never since died out in English Christendom." And on another occasion he declared, "The Methodist movement in both its branches, Arminian and Calvinistic, has molded the character of the English-speaking Protestantism of the world." This great representative of the Church of England certainly answers affirmatively to Tyerman's question in his introduction to the "Life and Times of John Wesley," "Is it not a truth that Methodism is the greatest fact in the history of the Church of Christ?"

Macaulay ascribes to John Wesley a "genius for government not inferior to that of Richelieu." Buckle declares him to be "the first of theological statesmen," and the tribute of John Richard Green is no less remarkable. Thinking of the overflow of the Wesleyan movement, he says, "The Methodists themselves were the least result of the Methodist revival."

Austin Phelps declared in substance that Meth-

odism had saved religion from decay, and theology from the loss of the supernatural element.

Two or three more recent tributes may be added. An editorial in the *Spectator* (London), July 15, 1899, says: "England as a whole is as truly interested in Wesley as in Shakespeare; and it may well be doubted whether in the long course of her history, any one person has ever influenced her life in so direct, palpable, and powerful a way as John Wesley."

The words of Mr. Augustine Birrell, the English lawyer and literary critic, are noteworthy. In an article in *Scribner's Magazine* for December, 1899, he says: "You can not cut him [Wesley] out of our national life. No single figure influenced so many minds; no single voice touched so many hearts. No other man did such a life's work for England."

He characterizes Wesley's Journal as, "the most amazing record of human exertion ever penned or endured—a book full of plots and plays and novels which quivers with life and is crammed full of character. If you want to get into the last century, to feel its pulses throb beneath your finger, be content sometimes to leave the letters of Horace Walpole unturned; . . . nay, even deny yourself your

annual reading of Boswell or your biennial retreat with Sterne, and ride up and down the country with the greatest force of the Eighteenth Century in England" (John Wesley).

With another quotation from the address of President Wilson at Wesleyan, I close this remarkable series of encomiums upon the achievements of Methodism. "Everything that made for the regeneration of the times seemed to link itself with Methodism. The great impulse of humane feeling which marked the closing years of the century seemed in no small measure to spring from it: the reform of prisons, the agitation for the abolition of slavery, the establishment of Missionary Societies and Bible Societies, the introduction into life and even into the law of pity for the poor, compassion for those who must suffer. The noble philanthropies and reforms which brighten the annals of the nineteenth century had their spiritual birth in the eighteenth. Wesley had carried Christianity to the masses of the people, had renewed the mission of Christ Himself, and all things began to take color from what he had done."

Now the question may be asked as to what all this has to do with Methodism's present responsibility to the Kingdom of God. I answer, "Much

every way." A movement, whose past achievements have been so signal, whose triumphs have called forth such words of praise from such a variety of sources, is thereby forever obligated to do well.

Moreover, the masterful spirit of Methodism has begotten the hope in many non-Methodist hearts that the battle shall be the Lord's. I only speak what every Methodist preacher knows when I say that there is a secret feeling in the hearts of many representatives of other denominations, that however fares the battle with them, Methodism will not fail. Here, they say, is a power which can cope with Roman Catholicism in numbers and aggressiveness; here is the type of Christianity which can successfully measure arms with the powers of darkness.

Basing our argument upon the powerful influence which Methodism has confessedly wielded among the Protestant Churches since the beginning of its history, it would not seem to be putting it too strongly to say that the weal of Protestantism seems committed to us, and that as goes Methodism so goes Protestantism. And, of course, as goes Protestantism so goes the progress of the race in all that is vital to its welfare. The wondrous marvel of our past achievements is a ringing challenge to

us to arm ourselves for the battle and, in the name of our God, to go forth to victory.

Now, if Methodism with its limited numbers and restricted opportunity achieved such results in the earlier history, what ought not to be expected of us now with our ever-increasing millions of adherents, our splendid material equipment and our infinite resources in Almighty God?

The old-time spirit in our new and larger opportunity will make us an invincible power for God and for mankind.

METHODISM'S HIGH IDEALS.

But Methodism's responsibility, born of its noble history, finds confirmation and re-enforcement from the lofty ideals of which it was in the beginning, and ever shall be the representative and champion. Every Christian denomination has a heritage in the conceptions bequeathed to it by its founders as to what constitutes essential Christianity.

Now what is Methodism? In answering this question certainly all will agree that it is fair to go to the fountain head of our history, and to determine what Methodism really is in the light of the ideals bequeathed to it by its great founder. This is the highest tribunal to which the question can be referred for settlement.

I venture the statement that no interpretation of Christianity has ever been given to the world which in things fundamental is nearer the Christianity of Christ Himself. The magnificent ideals entertained for and bequeathed to the movement by Wesley constitute a heritage which the Church of to-day must cherish and perpetuate.

I wish to discuss them as follows: The Evangelistic Ideal, the Ethical Ideal, the Theological Ideal, and the Higher Life Ideal.

The Evangelistic Ideal.

This was a growth in Wesley's thought and experience. While yet a very young man he agreed fully with the serious man whom he met and who told him, "The Bible knows nothing of a solitary religion." During his college days he included not only the student body in his evangelistic efforts, but the languishing prisoners in the castle jail as well. As the ideal enlarges it sends him across the Atlantic on his ever-memorable mission to the American Indians. But it has its final and full expression in the great cry, "The world is my parish."

To go with the Gospel's blessing of pardon and peace to the last man on earth who had not heard its message, became the all-consuming passion of his life. In the fulfillment of this passion he has

left the record of labors so abundant as to not only challenge our admiration, but he has left us in absolute wonderment at the marvelous achievements of his dauntless spirit. Mr. Birrell, from whom I have already quoted, thus describes this phase of Wesley's work. He says: "John Wesley contested the cause of Christ during a campaign which lasted forty years. He did it for the most part on horseback. He paid more turnpikes than any man who ever bestrode a beast. Eight thousand miles was his annual record for many a long year, during each of which he seldom preached less frequently than a thousand times. Had he but preserved his scores at all the inns where he lodged, they would have made by themselves a history of prices. And throughout it all he never knew what depression of spirits meant — though he had much to try him, suits in Chancery and a jealous wife.

"In the course of this unparalleled contest Wesley visited again and again the most out-of-the-way districts—the remotest corners of England—places which to-day lie far removed even from the searcher after the picturesque.

"To-day when the map of England looks like a gridiron of railways, none but the sturdiest of pedestrians, the most determined of cyclists can retrace

the steps of Wesley and his horse, and stand by the rocks and the natural amphitheaters in Cornwall and Northumberland, in Lancashire and Berkshire, where he preached his Gospel to the heathen."

This consuming zeal spoiled him for leisurely good fellowship, as Dr. Johnson complained to Boswell. Indeed it spoiled him for anything but the doing of his Master's business—a good way, let us observe, for a man to be spoiled.

That the Methodism of to-day should hold itself true to the evangelistic spirit of its great founder, is most important. The time was when we enjoyed a peculiar primacy among all the forces of Christendom for our leadership in evangelistic zeal and effectual accomplishment. Is another to take our crown? God forbid. Dr. Kelley, in a recent number of the *Review,* sounds the battle cry in a strong editorial entitled "The Call for Aggressive Evangelism." He well says that "all our history will cry shame on us if we relinquish our place at the head of the column." "The main question," he declares, "is the immediate salvation of men." May the Spirit of the living God burn that sentence so deep into the heart of universal Methodism that very speedily the voices of souls born anew at its altars shall join in antiphonal response to the chorus of the skies,

"Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

The Ethical Ideal.

We now turn to the consideration of the ethical ideal given by Wesley to his societies. And we must not fail to note that Wesley, like our Lord Himself, ever accentuates most strongly the ethical element. In his preaching and administration this element is ever in the forefront. No man in the history of the Church of God has shown a stronger perception and a firmer grasp of the ethical significance of Christianity than this same John Wesley. On this point he is the equal of any of the boastful moderns. He was a genius in his ability to go straight to the ethical core of every problem with which he dealt. And in every case his statement of the ethical principle is as clear as daylight. Having been assured of the correctness of his principle, he applies it most relentlessly to himself, to his preachers and to his people. Take, for instance, his statement of a Christian's obligation with respect to his earthly possessions, which is certainly one of the most practical tests that can be made of the genuineness of a man's religion. "Make all you can. Save all you can. Give all you can."

There it is in a nutshell—a thoroughly ethical statement, which will stand the severest test—of the whole duty of a Christian in the matter of his earthly possessions. It is capable of universal application—is good alike for the Methodist preacher and for the millionaire.

His standards for his preachers are found in "The Rules for a Preacher's Conduct." They find perfect illustration in his own character and practice. Without giving them in full let us glance for a moment at the gist of them. "Be diligent. Be serious. Converse sparingly and conduct yourselves prudently with women. Believe evil of no one without good evidence; unless you see it done, take heed how you credit it. Put the best construction on everything. You know the judge is always supposed to be on the prisoner's side. Speak evil of no one. Tell every one under your care what you think wrong in his conduct and temper and that lovingly and plainly, as soon as may be. Avoid all affectation. Be ashamed of nothing but sin. Be punctual. You have nothing to do but save souls; therefore spend and be spent in this work. Act in all things not according to your own will, but as a son in the Gospel." Here is a fine brochure on

"The Strenuous Life," which antedates our honored President by more than a hundred years.

Wesley's Standard of Conduct for his people is contained in the General Rules of the societies. In the form in which he left them they are a part of our priceless heritage and a fine illustration of their author's practical sagacity. His restraint upon amusements was covered by the statement of the principle that members of the societies were not expected to take such diversions as can not be used in the name of the Lord Jesus, the question of the practice of each individual being left finally to his own conscience. And this brings us to the much-discussed paragraph No. 248 in our Discipline. Should it ever have been inserted? And now since it is there should it be allowed to remain? What does Christian ethics require in answer to these questions?

Let it be granted without argument that the motive for its insertion by the General Conference of 1872 was entirely good, though the constitutionality of the procedure has been called in question by some of our ablest parliamentarians. The purpose of the insertion of the paragraph was to stay the tides of worldliness which were sweeping through the Church. Of course, it was a very shal-

low philosophy which expected to effect a remedy by such a method. Men may not be legislated into spirituality, albeit the legislation bear the stamp of the ruling Conference in Methodism. Only a deeper, richer life of the Spirit can cure the evils aimed at in this paragraph. Wesley's method of regenerating England from its gross immoralities by flooding it with a new and aggressive spiritual life may well be remembered in this connection.

Another important aspect of the subject has not received due consideration. As the matter now stands, the General Conference is in the position of assuming to be the keeper of the consciences of the membership of the Church. For Methodism to stand in this attitude is for her to desert the broad ground of Protestantism and to recede to the position of Roman Catholicism. The right of private judgment is the vital point of distinction between Protestantism and Romanism. If the General Conference has the right to become the keeper of the consciences of men touching the question of amusements, then it has the same right in other matters. But where does this lead to? It leads to the abandonment of the essential principles of the Lutheran Reformation. As free men and as Methodists are we ready to go thus far? It must be admitted in

all frankness that our present position smacks unpleasantly of priestcraft. We conclude then that this paragraph was an enactment well intended, directed towards a worthy end, but by a wrong method.

But now it is objected that the Church, having once taken this position, can not recede without giving occasion for the charge of having lowered the standard, and the result would be the opening of the gates to a flood tide of worldliness. There is force in the statement. What then is the way out of the dilemma? The path seems to me both clear and easy. Let the General Conference appoint a commission, representative of all phases of opinion on the subject. Let this commission recast the paragraph, retaining in it all that is vital to godliness, and then let it be taken off the mandatory basis and be made strongly advisory. Let it be declared in no uncertain tone that he who indulges in these practices will do so at the risk of his own soul's welfare. The paragraph will thus accomplish all that it is now accomplishing, and I believe can be made more effectual by virtue of becoming persuasive rather than mandatory in tone.

Moreover, this will put our Church on Protestant ground and in the Christian position. St. Paul

said: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men." Our Lord himself said: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." The great power of the Gospel is its persuasive, drawing power. No pastor of sense, in this day at least, goes after men in the name of Jesus Christ, cracking the whip of "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not." But every pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church must go with a Church behind him which in its highest deliberative body has taken that attitude. Many of our most successful and most godly pastors have come to feel that the Church's present position is an embarrassment, yea a positive hindrance to the work of bringing men into the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let the Church then put itself in the persuasive, reasonable attitude of the Gospel which its ministers preach, and it will do, far more effectively the work of its Lord and Master.

The Theological Ideal.

I do not know that others have been impressed as I have on this point. I never read the story of John Wesley's life without marveling anew at the amazing breadth of the man theologically. He is the most catholic man of the Christian centuries. Think of a man back in the eighteenth century, the

leader of a great religious movement, throwing down the challenge to all the world, "I desire a league offensive and defensive with every soldier of Jesus Christ;" receiving multitudes into the membership of his societies upon the simple condition of a "desire to be saved from their sins and to flee from the wrath to come," without exacting a single qualification as touching doctrinal opinions and beliefs. And the best part about it all is, that the plan worked so splendidly. Hear him in his "Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion." "If you say, 'Because you hold opinions which I can not believe are true:' I answer, Believe them true or false; I will not quarrel with you about any opinion, only see that your heart is right toward God, that you know and love the Lord Jesus Christ; that you love your neighbor and walk as your Master walked; I desire no more. I am sick of opinions; I am weary to bear them. My soul loathes this frothy food. Give me solid and substantial religion; give me an humble, gentle lover of God and man; a man full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy; a man laying himself out in the work of faith, the patience of hope, the labor of love. Let my soul be with these Christians, wheresoever they are and whatsoever opinion they are of. Who-

soever doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother." Hear him again in his "Advice to the People Called Methodists." "Be true also to your principles touching opinions and the externals of religion. Use every ordinance which you believe is of God; but beware of narrowness of spirit towards those who use them not. Conform yourself to those modes of worship which you approve; yet love as brethren those who can not conform. Lay so much stress on opinions, that all your own if it be possible, may agree with truth and reason; but have a care of anger, dislike or contempt toward those whose opinions differ from yours. Condemn no man for not thinking as you think; let every one enjoy the full and free liberty of thinking for himself; let every man use his own judgment, since every man must give an account of himself to God. Abhor every approach in every kind or degree to the spirit of persecution. If you can not reason or persuade a man into the truth, never attempt to force him into it. If love will not compel him to come in, leave him to God the Judge of all."

It must be as clear as sunlight to every thinking man, that if Methodism is to be true to the

theological ideal of its founder, there will be little room within our borders for heresy trials and heresy hunters. Good Methodists will be engaged in better business. The spirit of our great founder bids us hunt for sinners, not for heretics. There are more of the sinners, and it is both an easier and a far more praiseworthy undertaking to convict them.

Let it be understood clearly then that the theological ideal of Methodism at the beginning of the twentieth century and for evermore is the same as that of good John Wesley; viz., "To think and let think."

To rank John Wesley accurately among the world's great theologians requires some nicety of judgment. Dr. William North Rice, Professor T. C. Hall and others have not placed him in the front rank. Their standard, however, is that of a theoretical theologian. Adjudged by the broader standard of the effect of his influence upon theology, John Wesley is certainly an epochal man.

Dr. Denney, in his "Death of Christ," says: "If evangelists were our theologians, or theologians our evangelists, we should at least be nearer the ideal Church." Now Wesley developed his theology in the atmosphere of a warm evangelism. His head took counsel of his heart, and this fact accounts for

Methodism's "preachable theology," as Joseph Cook characterized it.

As a matter of fact, John Wesley is the most revolutionary factor in Christian theology since the time of Augustine. He not only changed the face of theological thought, but its very method. Old Calvinism, with its harsh conception of God, held the field. The study of theology in the light of experience was neglected. It was approached almost solely from the Godward side, and, as a result, was highly metaphysical, unnatural, and unreal. Our fathers were taunted with the charge that their theology was weak because its development was from the manward side; but at the beginning of the twentieth century every theologian of repute in Christendom develops his system from the manward side. Wesley insisted that experience is one of the best sources of theology. It was the inductive, the scientific method, and has saved Christendom from the barren speculations of Agnosticism. This little man Wesley invaded the stronghold of Augustinian and Calvinistic teaching, and has literally led the world back to the truer view point of the early Greek fathers. Dr. Theodore T. Munger, a representative of the Calvinistic school, in the December (1903) number of the *Atlantic Monthly*,

draws a comparison between Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley which is very striking. He says: "The broadest line of cleavage in doctrinal belief in the Protestant Churches in this country is that between Calvinism and Arminianism." Edwards devoted his great powers to stemming the growing tide of the latter, but in vain. He is honored by scholars and historians for his greatness and his service to the State, as his centuries come round, but the multitude is insensible to him, while it pours out millions of money in memory of Wesley. "Wesley's gift of Methodism to America," says Dr. Munger, "was a possession worth all liturgies."

The Higher Life Ideal.

Some surprise may be caused that this should be included as one of Wesley's fundamental ideals. And yet it ought not to be so. The power of Wesley's message was in the fact that he proclaimed a salvation which was both free and full. Why should we be afraid of a great doctrine because some hobbyists have vitiated it, if the strength of God is in it? Wesley's putting of it is both rational and virile in his work on "Christian Perfection," in which he shows that it is not the perfection of the Deity nor of angels, but that which is possible to human beings interfused by divine grace.

With the ultra introspective, morbid view of this doctrine with which the Church has sometimes been pestered, I have not the slightest sympathy. Nor do I wish to interject into the discussion a controversy as to whether it be an evolution or a distinct experience. If the Spirit of God works by both methods in the work of regeneration, a fact which we must all admit, I know of no reason why that Spirit may not do the same here. But I do profoundly believe the Scriptures teach the higher life in grace, as an experience attainable by all; that a man's will shall be absolutely surrendered to God's will; that his own personal ambition shall be swallowed up in an all-consuming ambition for the Kingdom of his Lord and Master; that the deep seat of his affections shall be completely purified by the indwelling of divine grace, and that he shall bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. In other words, that a man in every nook and corner of his being shall be God's man and only God's man. If our Gospel to-day does not mean this much at least, then is it another Gospel from that which St. Paul preached.

This doctrine must still be held, must still be preached, and, most of all, must still be lived, without ostentation, without partiality and without

hypocrisy. How magnificently Charles Wesley states the doctrine in that splendid hymn:

"O for a heart to praise my God,
A heart from sin set free!
A heart that always feels Thy blood,
So freely spilt for me!

A heart resigned, submissive, meek,
My great Redeemer's throne;
Where only Christ is heard to speak,
Where Jesus reigns alone.

O for a lowly, contrite heart,
Believing, true and clean,
Which neither life nor death can part
From Him that dwells within!

A heart in every thought renewed,
And full of love divine;
Perfect, and right, and pure, and good,
A copy, Lord, of Thine.

Thy nature, gracious Lord, impart;
Come quickly from above;
Write Thy new name upon my heart,
Thy new, best name of Love."

It is still and must ever be the mission of Methodism to spread Scriptural holiness throughout the earth.

METHODISM'S ADVANTAGEOUS RELATION TO PRESENT-DAY LIFE AND THOUGHT.

Methodism's responsibility imposed by the greatness of its history and its high ideals, is tremen-

dously intensified by its advantageous relation to the theological and religious condition of the world to-day. In the last chapter of his learned and luminous "History of the Christian Church," Bishop Hurst wrote these very significant words:

"The loosening of dogmatic bonds is one of the most remakable legacies which the nineteenth century leaves to the twentieth. Even the Roman Catholic Church is moved by this age-spirit. No Church has escaped it or can escape it. Opinions which caused heresy trials half a century ago are now considered conservative. Twenty-five years ago, the acceptance of the main results . . . of this movement would have been dangerous to one's ecclesiastical standing, but to-day the great majority of sholars in all evangelical Churches have accepted these results to a greater or less degree and with perfect impunity." This is not a piece of speculation by some mere upstart. It is the sober statement of a now historic movement as seen by the scholarly Bishop Hurst.

Now my earnest contention is that among all the forces of Christendom, Methodism is best prepared to lead the way in the new constructive work which is essential to the faith of the future. We are free from the shackles of fetichism. The underly-

ing philosophical principle of our theology is sound. And the life of the Spirit, which we have always so strongly emphasized, is after all, the vital principle of the new constructive movement.

A little time ago the great Harnack said to a class of his students: "I could wish that the argument for the resurrection of Jesus Christ were more complete and convincing, but speaking as a Christian man, I know that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead." What a comment upon the words of St. Paul! "No man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." It is the reappearance in the most unexpected quarter of Wesley's emphasis upon experimental religion. From the beginning Methodism banked everything upon life. It seems a providential coincidence in the development of philosophy and theology that Wesley should have built so strongly upon the fundamental principle of the Kantian philosophy, viz., the authority of consciousness as the test of truth. It is a fine instance of two great minds arriving at the same great truth, though approaching it each by a different road.

Does God by His Spirit dwell in the hearts of men? If He does that is a sufficient answer to every objection to the fact of miracle, for it is the greatest miracle of all the ages. It is the answer, too, as to

whether inspiration is a fact. And it is a sufficient answer to many a minor question. As Methodists we know that God does so do.

It is my conviction that God calls us this very hour to the conscious and effectual leadership of His redeemed hosts. We have not duly appreciated our vantage-ground. With such a history and such ideals behind us, and such a call for us from the world's need, we should not be content in this day to stand upon some obscure street corner and watch the procession go by. Instead of a feeling (which is sometimes met) that as a Church we have practically had our day, a right view of the case will reveal to us that our day has only fairly begun and is yet in its early morning.

But we are told that the drift of things in our times is unfriendly to the Methodist spirit of evangelism. I do not believe it. The best part of the new thought development is the "new evangelism." It is indeed the heart of it constructively; and all that Methodism needs to do to-day is to keep steadily at its Master's business with glowing heart and clear, ringing message.

I recently read a great book entitled, "The Spirit and the Incarnation," by a Scotch Congregationalist

named Walker—a stong, bold thinker. Near the close of the volume he sums up the distinctive features of present-day thought and feeling in relation to religion. He covers the ground in six propositions, as follows: 1. "The Return to Christ;" 2. "The New Emphasis upon the Fatherhood of God;" 3. "The Accentuation of Character as Distinguished from Mere Belief in Doctrines;" 4. "A New Love of Truth;" 5. "The New Interest in the Social Aspects of Life as Distinguished from a Merely Individualistic Piety;" 6. "The Revived Feeling after the Unity of the Church of Christ." Has there ever before in the world's history been an age the summing up of whose spirit could be made in six such propositions? Perhaps, after all, we are getting more of the kernel of Christianity in these days than some have been wont to think. Towards each one of these propositions the spirit of Methodism is most cordial. Indeed, they would not form a bad *résumé* of the best life and thought of our Church to-day.

A Wesleyan Methodist minister, writing as a Methodist, recently said: "We were born in revolution, we were cradled in change, we were brought up in adaptation, and have had our very being in alteration, accommodation, adventure. Our strength

is never to sit still. We are unalterably committed to nothing but the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ."

It is well, and it is great cause for thankfulness. We ought to be grateful that we are not committed to some iron-clad creed, musty with the smell of a dead theology. And besides, the religion of Jesus Christ is a big enough thing in itself—the biggest thing in the thought of God thus far revealed, big enough for the employment of all our time and the engaging of all our talents. It was the eloquent Chalmers who said, "Our only business with Christianity is to proceed upon it." We have been proceeding upon it *somewhat*. Our Twentieth-century Thank-offering Movement of more than twenty-one millions of dollars has called forth many generous compliments from our sister denominations. When it was first proposed, it was characterized everywhere as the most visionary proposition ever flaunted in the face of the Church. But the accomplishment of it shows what we can do as a Church when we stop our playing and get down earnestly to our Lord's business. It is a creditable achievement, and is about what we ought to begin to do now every year.

The time is now ripe for an enterprise upon a higher plane. Let the leaders of our Church at the

approaching General Conference in Los Angeles show their faith and daring in presenting to the Church a scheme for the immediate utilization of the reserve spiritual power in our membership, both lay and ministerial, for the conquest of all men everywhere in the name of Jesus Christ. Such a scheme would call for rare wisdom, but certainly it ought to be practicable to do something worth while in this direction. Rev. R. J. Campbell, pastor of City Temple, London, after returning from his recent visit to this country, said he took away the impression that "among American ministers intellect and spirituality were divorced; that unhappily they were not often found in the same men; that the intellectual and spiritual leaders of the Church were different sets." How far this may be true of us as Methodists, it is not my purpose now to inquire. I do not believe it is true very largely of us. But in so far as it is true, it certainly should be corrected. Methodism's ideal for its leaders is, not that they are placed in high position solely, or even chiefly, for ornamental purposes, but to inspire the Church with the spirit of bold achievement in the name of its Lord and Master. They will thus "adorn the doctrine of God." One must be impressed that there is much which goes under the name of Christianity

even in Methodism which counts for little practically in the salvation of the world.

Dr. Nathaniel J. Burton, in his Yale Lectures on Preaching, says: "It has been the sin of my life that I have not always taken aim. I have been a lover of subjects. If I had loved men more and loved subjects only as God's instruments of good for men, it would have been better, and I should have had more to show for all my labor under the sun." With a truer spirit of real Christian philanthropy that great-hearted commoner, Henry George, was accustomed to say, *"I am for men."* Let it be understood from this day on, and even for evermore, that all Methodism is for men in the name of Jesus Christ, and that, too, immediately. Let this be the watchword thoughout every bishop's realm, on every presiding elder's district, and from every pastor's pulpit; the motto over every editor's chair, in every agent's and secretary's office, in every president's and professor's classroom. "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."